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## The 2014 Czech Senate elections<sup>☆</sup>

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### 1. Introduction

On 10 and 11 October 2014 in the Czech Republic, the first round of voting was held for elections to the Senate, with the second round following a week later, on 17 and 18 October. One third of the 81 Senators were replaced in the elections, i.e. 27 seats were contested (seats of the senators who were elected in the 2008 elections). About a year had elapsed since the election of the Chamber of Deputies, the Lower House of the Parliament. Following the election of the European Parliament in May, the Senate election provided another test for the government comprising the Social Democrats (ČSSD), the ANO 2011 (ANO),<sup>1</sup> and the Christian Democrats (KDU-ČSL), which was formed after the election of the Chamber of Deputies. ČSSD had before the 2014 election an absolute majority in the Senate, its party group numbered 44 members, but 19 of them were elected in 2008. Therefore it seemed that ČSSD would lose their majority; the question was only how serious the losses would be.

ANO 2011, as one of the new parties, had no seats in the Senate, KDU-ČSL had four senators only (elected in 2010 or 2012). Therefore the position of the coalition partners of ČSSD was completely different. They tried to win enough seats to establish (ANO) or re-establish (KDU-ČSL) their party groups in the Senate. For the opposition it was a test if they were able to weaken dominance of the

main government parties (ČSSD and ANO).

### 2. Background

Czech Senate elections are held under two-round system with run-off. The effect of the electoral system depends on timing of the elections. Until 2014 the Senate elections were held approximately 5 months after the Chamber of Deputies elections (in 1996, 1998, 2002, 2006 and 2010), or as mid-term elections, two and half years after the Chamber elections (in 2000, 2004, 2008 and 2012). The electoral system tends to favour large parties or an alliance of smaller centrist parties, in case of the mid-term elections the largest opposition party or an opposition centrist alliance. Further it tends to enable winning of some seats by independents and small parties (both parliamentary and non-parliamentary parties) and to eliminate of both far-left and far-right parties (including under-representation or elimination of the Communist Party – KSČM) [Table 1](#).

Members of the Senate are elected for a six-year term, with a third of the Senators replaced every two years. Thus, elections to the Senate always take place in 27 constituencies, with the first round held concurrently with regional or local elections. The terms of both the regional and local assemblies are four years, and regional elections are always held at the mid-term point of the local assemblies, therefore Senate elections are always concurrent with either regional or local elections. In 2014, Senate elections were held simultaneously with local elections.

Senate elections are traditionally considered second-order elections, due to the unbalanced nature of Czech bicameralism. With the exception of approving changes to the Constitution, international treaties, and selected acts, the Senate is the weaker chamber, as its potential veto over legislation can be overridden by the Chamber of Deputies by an absolute majority of all of its members. The Senate does play an important role in choosing the judges for the Constitutional Court, as it approves the candidates proposed by the President. The Senate is not involved in votes of confidence or non-confidence in government, and since the introduction of the direct election of the President in 2013, it takes no part in the presidential election, aside from the nomination process ([Constitution of the Czech Republic, 2013](#)). The lesser importance of Senate elections is further underlined by the fact that both parties and the media focus on local elections, which are often afforded

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<sup>1</sup> Ano means "Yes" in Czech, ANO was originally an acronym for the Action of Dissatisfied Citizens, but this name was hardly used and now it is nearly forgotten ([Stegmaier and Linek, 2014](#)).

**Table 1**  
Results of the Czech Senate elections 2014.

| Party  | First round |           |           | Second round |           |           |       |
|--|-------------|-----------|-----------|--------------|-----------|-----------|-------|
|  | Candidates  | Votes     | Votes (%) | Candidates   | Votes     | Votes (%) | Seats |
| Czech social democratic party (ČSSD)                                   | 27          | 226,239   | 22.04     | 20           | 173,799   | 36.67     | 10    |
| ANO2011  | 26          | 180,136   | 17.55     | 8            | 63,569    | 13.41     | 4     |
| Civic democratic party (ODS)   | 23          | 110,485   | 10.76     | 6            | 44,264    | 9.34      | 1     |
| ODS-led coalition  | 1           | 7783      | 0.76      | 1            | 8885      | 1.87      | 1     |
| Communist party of Bohemia and Moravia (KSČM)                          | 27          | 99,973    | 9.74      | 0            | 0         | 0         | 0     |
| TOP09 + Mayors and independents  | 18          | 87,143    | 8.49      | 4            | 30,476    | 6.43      | 0     |
| TOP09 only   | 1           | 4994      | 0.49      | 0            | 0         | 0         | 0     |
| STAN only  | 2           | 15,576    | 1.52      | 1            | 11,099    | 2.34      | 1     |
| Christian and democratic party – Czechoslovak people's party (KDU-ČSL) | 14          | 84,328    | 8.21      | 8            | 77,103    | 16.27     | 4     |
| KDU-ČSL + Green Party (SZ)   | 3           | 34,765    | 3.39      | 3            | 32,854    | 6.93      | 3     |
| KDU-ČSL + SZ + small parties   | 2           | 2278      | 0.56      | 0            | 0         | 0         | 0     |
| KDU-ČSL led coalition without SZ                                       | 1           | 7704      | 0.75      | 0            | 0         | 0         | 0     |
| Green party (SZ)   | 4           | 6670      | 0.65      | 0            | 0         | 0         | 0     |
| SZ + Czech pirate party  | 1           | 4231      | 0.41      | 0            | 0         | 0         | 0     |
| Czech pirate party   | 4           | 5454      | 0.53      | 0            | 0         | 0         | 0     |
| Party of civic rights (SPO)  | 10          | 22,080    | 2.15      | 1            | 11,971    | 2.53      | 1     |
| Freeholder party of the Czech Republic                                 | 1           | 14,071    | 1.37      | 1            | 11,660    | 2.46      | 1     |
| Mayors for Liberec region  | 1           | 6633      | 0.65      | 1            | 8246      | 1.74      | 1     |
| Party of free citizen  | 11          | 14,508    | 1.41      | 0            | 0         | 0         | 0     |
| Dawn of direct democracy (Dawn)  | 9           | 13,331    | 1.30      | 0            | 0         | 0         | 0     |
| Dawn-led coalition   | 1           | 2387      | 0.23      | 0            | 0         | 0         | 0     |
| Republic   | 9           | 9107      | 0.89      | 0            | 0         | 0         | 0     |
| Ostravak   | 1           | 4605      | 0.45      | 0            | 0         | 0         | 0     |
| Independents   | 3           | 4390      | 0.43      | 0            | 0         | 0         | 0     |
| Mayors for citizens  | 2           | 4080      | 0.40      | 0            | 0         | 0         | 0     |
| City for you   | 1           | 3945      | 0.38      | 0            | 0         | 0         | 0     |
| Our city Frýdek-Místek   | 1           | 3356      | 0.33      | 0            | 0         | 0         | 0     |
| Independent/democrats  | 1           | 3267      | 0.32      | 0            | 0         | 0         | 0     |
| Club of committed non-party members                                    | 1           | 2738      | 0.27      | 0            | 0         | 0         | 0     |
| Civic conservative party   | 3           | 2270      | 0.22      | 0            | 0         | 0         | 0     |
| Goat alternative   | 1           | 2186      | 0.21      | 0            | 0         | 0         | 0     |
| Tories   | 1           | 1907      | 0.19      | 0            | 0         | 0         | 0     |
| Movement of good transformation  | 1           | 1742      | 0.17      | 0            | 0         | 0         | 0     |
| United democrats – Association of independents                         | 1           | 1534      | 0.15      | 0            | 0         | 0         | 0     |
| No Brussels – National democrats                                       | 4           | 1476      | 0.14      | 0            | 0         | 0         | 0     |
| DOMOV  | 3           | 1172      | 0.11      | 0            | 0         | 0         | 0     |
| For sport and health   | 1           | 1104      | 0.11      | 0            | 0         | 0         | 0     |
| Conservative alliance 2014   | 2           | 1055      | 0.10      | 0            | 0         | 0         | 0     |
| Vision 2014  | 1           | 819       | 0.08      | 0            | 0         | 0         | 0     |
| Ostrava forum  | 1           | 779       | 0.08      | 0            | 0         | 0         | 0     |
| Alternative for Plzeň  | 1           | 702       | 0.07      | 0            | 0         | 0         | 0     |
| Caucus of independent citizens   | 1           | 639       | 0.06      | 0            | 0         | 0         | 0     |
| Solidarity, homeland and law   | 1           | 564       | 0.05      | 0            | 0         | 0         | 0     |
| SNK-European democrats   | 1           | 560       | 0.05      | 0            | 0         | 0         | 0     |
| Moravian democratic party + Healthy Hradisté                           | 1           | 508       | 0.05      | 0            | 0         | 0         | 0     |
| Party of common sense  | 1           | 474       | 0.05      | 0            | 0         | 0         | 0     |
| DOMA   | 1           | 459       | 0.04      | 0            | 0         | 0         | 0     |
| Citizens of the Czech Republic   | 1           | 457       | 0.04      | 0            | 0         | 0         | 0     |
| Moravians + LEV21  | 1           | 450       | 0.04      | 0            | 0         | 0         | 0     |
| Antibursík – stop eco-terror   | 1           | 347       | 0.03      | 0            | 0         | 0         | 0     |
| Labour party   | 1           | 249       | 0.02      | 0            | 0         | 0         | 0     |
| Czech sovereignty  | 1           | 166       | 0.02      | 0            | 0         | 0         | 0     |
| Independents   | 5           | 15,228    | 1.48      | 0            | 0         | 0         | 0     |
| Registered voters  | 242         | 1026615   | 100       | 54           | 473,926   | 100       | 27    |
| Turnout  |             | 2,853,106 |           |              | 2,853,618 |           |       |
|  |             | 1,101,753 | 38.62     |              | 476,334   | 16.69     |       |

Source: Czech Statistical Office (<http://www.volby.cz>).

greater attention than Senate elections, particularly in the largest cities.

### 3. Candidates and campaign

The incumbents defending their seats in 2014 had been elected in 2008. ČSSD was the clear winner of this election, taking 23 out of the 27 seats, 3 seats won the Civic Democrats (ODS) and 1 seat KSČM. ČSSD had before the 2014 election an absolute majority in the Senate, its party group numbered 44 members. Thus, the 2014

elections represented a threat to the social democratic leadership. After the elections to the Chamber of Deputies, which ČSSD had won, albeit with the smallest share of the vote since 1992, the party chair Bohuslav Sobotka faced an attempt on the part of intraparty opposition to overthrow him (Havlík, 2014). Although he withstood this crisis, it can be assumed that his intraparty opponents would use any potential failure in the Senate election to renew their attack.

ODS and TOP 09, two right-wing parties that had been in government until 2013, suffered a terrible defeat in the elections to the

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