

32. ELECTIONS

On 2 and 3 October 2020, regular elections to regional councils were held in 13 Regions of the Czech Republic for another four-year electoral term. (The elections were not held in the Capital City of Prague, the Hl. m. Praha Region, in which the function of the regional council is performed by the Prague City Assembly, elected pursuant to the Act on elections to local councils.) Taking place concurrently with elections to regional councils, also regular elections to the Senate of the Parliament of the CR took place in 27 electoral districts. It applied to those districts, in which the electoral term of senators elected in 2014 was about to be finished or to the electoral districts Nos 24, 39, and 78, in which senators were elected in 2018 and 2019 in the by-elections. The elections were announced by the Decision of the President of the Czech Republic published in the Collection of Laws under No 169/2020 Sb.

The elections were held only in the territory of the Czech Republic and their execution was governed by the Act No 130/2000 Sb, on Regional Council Elections, as subsequently amended, and the Act No 247/1995 Sb, on Elections to the Parliament of the Czech Republic, as subsequently amended.

Ballots were cast, examined, and counted in permanent electoral wards; the ward election committees were the same for both elections. The elections to regional councils took place in 13 656 electoral wards, the elections to the Senate of the Parliament of the Czech Republic in 5 160 electoral wards, and in 4 773 electoral wards the aforementioned elections were held concurrently. The total number of electoral wards includes also special wards (so-called "covid wards") established to present results from special ways of voting found out by vote-counting commissions that have been established by relevant regional authorities.

These elections were accompanied by increased sanitary-epidemic measures related to the Covid-19 disease. The Act 350/2020 Sb, on special ways of voting in elections to regional councils and to the Senate in 2020, was published in the Collection of Laws on 24 August 2020. It provided for special ways of voting for persons for whom a quarantine or isolation was ordered due to Covid-19 disease by a regional public health authority or by their general practitioner. The Act also enabled voting for voters placed (staying) in establishments (facilities) that had been closed (put under lockdown) by the decision of a regional public health authority. Special ways of voting were secured by special (electoral) commissions with a portable ballot box and counting of these votes were done by vote-counting commissions established at regional authorities.

For voters who participated in the elections pursuant to the Act No 350/2020 Sb and who due to being quarantined or isolated could not vote in polling stations, three types of special ways of voting had been prepared as follows:

- 1) Drive-in voting (voting from a motor vehicle) at a drive-in voting point (drive-in polling station) – these voting points had been established for each District and were adapted for a motor vehicle to drive through.
- 2) Voting in a residential social care facility that had been closed (under lockdown, quarantined) – a regional public health authority reported closed facilities in its territory to the regional authority and the regional authority sent a special (electoral) commission with a portable ballot box to those facilities.
- 3) Voting (by casting votes) into a special portable ballot box – if a quarantine order had been imposed on a citizen or he/she was in isolation and therefore could not use the drive-in voting, he/she could ask the regional authority for a special (electoral) commission with a portable ballot box to come, which came with a special portable ballot box to the citizen's home.

The **elections to regional councils** were held on the basis of universal, equal, and direct suffrage by secret ballot, using the proportional representation system. The number of seats in a regional council was determined for these elections in proportion to the population of the Region as at 1 January 2020; accordingly, 45, 55, or 65 councillors were to be elected.

Citizens of the Czech Republic who had attained the age of 18 years on the second polling day at the latest had the right to vote and were eligible to vote provided that no legal impediment to the exercise of their right to vote occurred, except for voters who were voting pursuant to the Act No 350/2020 Sb. Voters could exercise their right to vote in some of the electoral wards in the territorial district of the Region, in which they were included in the permanent electoral roll (permanent list of voters) according to their place of permanent residence.

Lists of candidates for elections to regional councils were to be submitted to registration offices by political parties, political movements, and coalitions thereof (hereinafter referred to as "election (electoral) parties"). The total of 9 711 valid candidates listed on 215 registered lists of candidates of 85 election (electoral) parties stood up in Regions in the elections for the total of 675 seats in regional councils.

Votes were cast as follows: voters inserted one ballot paper of an election (electoral) party chosen by them into an official envelope and cast the envelope into the ballot box, while they were allowed to mark in a required way up to four candidates on the ballot paper and thereby prefer them to others (hereinafter referred to as "preferential votes"). Only those election (electoral) parties winning at least 5% of the total

number of valid votes in the Region could compete for the determined number of seats in the council. The seats were then split among the election (electoral) parties in a single scrutiny, according to the Election Act, using electoral divisors. The seats won by an election (electoral) party were allocated to its candidates starting from the top of the list of candidates; provided that a candidate gained preferential votes making up at least 5% of the vote for the election (electoral) party in the Region, he/she jumped to the top for seat allocation. Provided that there were more such candidates, their order on the top positions was decided about by the number of preferential votes. In case that the number of their preferential votes was the same, what was deciding was the order of the candidate on the ballot paper.

The elections to the Senate of the Parliament of the Czech Republic were held on the basis of universal, equal, and direct right to vote (suffrage) by secret ballot using the majority voting system, in single-seat electoral districts (constituencies). The electoral term of senators is 6 years. A voter ID (an electoral card) can be used.

Delineation of electoral districts is in the Annex No 3 to the Act No 247/1995 Sb, on Elections to the Parliament of the Czech Republic, as subsequently amended. The amendment No 72/2018 Sb, which became effective on 19 May 2018, cancelled two sections of the Election Act and, as a result, electoral districts are not redistricted every time when the population in some of the electoral districts drops or increases by 15% compared to the average population per seat. Electoral districts remain to be delineated in the same way as in the year 2016.

Citizens of the Czech Republic who had attained the age of 18 years on the second polling day at the latest had the right to vote and were eligible to vote provided that no legal impediment to the exercise of their right to vote occurred, except for voters who were allowed to vote pursuant to the Act No 350/2020 Sb. Voters could exercise their right to vote in some of the electoral wards in the territory of the electoral district, in which they were included in the electoral roll (list of voters). Citizens of the Czech Republic with permanent residence abroad were also entitled to vote if they stayed in the territory of the Czech Republic on the polling day. They could vote in any electoral ward of the electoral district, in which the elections took place.

Political parties and political movements with registration at the Ministry of the Interior or their coalitions were allowed to nominate their candidates for the elections to the Senate or an individual independent candidate was also allowed to register (self-nominate) as a candidate for the elections provided that he or she met prerequisites set by law (hereinafter referred to as "election (electoral) parties"). In total, 235 candidates were standing for a seat in the elections from the total of 60 election (electoral) parties.

A voter inserted one ballot paper of the selected candidate into an official envelope and cast the envelope into the ballot box executing thereby his or her vote. If a candidate won over 50% of the total number of valid votes cast in the electoral district, he or she was elected senator. If none of the candidates won over 50% of valid votes cast, the senator was not elected and the second round of the elections took place in the electoral district a week later. It was a runoff between the two candidates who won the highest numbers of valid votes in the first round.

In the first round of the elections, on 2 and 3 October 2020, one senator was elected. In the electoral district No. 33 (Děčín), Zbyněk Linhart was elected senator; in the remaining 26 electoral districts, the second round of the elections took place on 9 and 10 October 2020.

Registered voters are the number of persons included in electoral rolls (lists of voters) (persons who meet prerequisites determined by law for the exercise of their right to vote or, in other words, active suffrage).

The number of issued official envelopes is equal to the number of voting voters who came to vote and were given, usually in the polling station, an official envelope to put their ballot paper in.

The number of returned official envelopes is the number of official envelopes cast by the voting voters into ballot boxes.

The turnout is calculated as the proportion of the number of voting voters (persons who were given an official envelope) in the registered voters (persons included in the electoral rolls (lists of voters)).

Names of election (electoral) parties that are too long have been shortened for the needs of presentation in tables. Only data on identical political entities are comparable to those from previous years. Nevertheless, identification according to the name (or an abbreviation) when comparing in time may not be unequivocal due to often changes (births of new political entities, changes of their names, changes in the composition of coalitions, etc.).

First names, surnames, and degrees of elected senators are taken over from applications for registration for the elections to the Senate of the Parliament of the CR, which had been submitted to the relevant registration office.

Since the percentages are rounded off, their sum may not be equal to 100. In the Table 32-3, data on the percentages of valid votes for election (electoral) parties are not rounded off and are provided to two decimal places.

Tables include complete voting results, including special ways of voting pursuant to the Act No 350/2020 Sb.

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Further information can be found on the website of the Czech Statistical Office at:

- www.czso.cz/csu/czso/elections_en
- www.volby.cz/index_en.htm