

32 ELECTIONS

Methodological notes

On 8 and 9 October 2021, regular **elections to the Chamber of Deputies of the Parliament of the Czech Republic** were held for another four-year electoral term. The elections were announced by the Decision of the President of the Czech Republic No 611/2020 Sb of 28 December 2020.

The way of determining the election results, the procedure of their further processing, up to the allocation of seats is governed by the Act No 247/1995 Sb, on Elections to the Parliament of the Czech Republic, as subsequently amended (hereinafter only referred to as "the Election Act"). An important change to the election legislation was brought by the Act No 189/2021 Sb, which responded to the finding of the Constitutional Court Ref No Pl. ÚS 44/17 (it cancelled some sections of the Election Act). The Act newly provided for the solution of conversion of votes into seats and also additional clauses for an entry of election parties in the vote counting (scrutiny). Presented data are based on results processed for the State Electoral Committee, adjusted based on the ruling Vol 102/2021 of the Supreme Administrative Court of 5 November 2021, by which the Court stated that the withdrawal of the candidature of the candidate No 16 of the SPOLU coalition standing for the election in the Jihomoravský Region was not valid and it newly determined the order of substitutes of the coalition.

These elections were accompanied by increased sanitary-epidemic measures related to the covid-19 disease. The Act No 296/2021 Sb, on Special Ways of Voting in the Elections to the Chamber of Deputies of the Parliament of the Czech Republic in 2021 and amending certain acts, was published in the Collection of Laws on 21 July 2021. It provided for special ways of voting for persons to whom a quarantine or isolation was ordered by a regional public health authority or by their general practitioner due to their becoming ill with the covid-19 disease. 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 for voting 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 296/2021 Sb and who as a consequence of 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 in the territory of the Capital City of Prague) 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 to those facilities a special (electoral) commission for voting.
3. Voting by casting votes into a special portable ballot box – if a quarantine order or isolation were imposed on a citizen and he/she therefore could not use the drive-in voting, they could ask the regional authority for a special (electoral) commission for voting to come, which came to the citizen's home with a special portable ballot box.

The elections to the Chamber of Deputies of the Parliament of the Czech Republic were held on the basis of universal, equal, and direct suffrage by secret ballot, following the principle of proportional representation in the electoral regions. It is laid down in the Constitution of the Czech Republic that the number of deputies elected (seats) shall be 200. An annex to the Act defines 14 electoral regions, which are identical with an administrative breakdown of the Czech Republic to Regions.

It was also made possible for Czech citizens to vote abroad, in polling stations installed in selected embassies, general consulates, or other types of representation of the Czech Republic. Results from voting abroad were added to results of the Ústecký electoral region (as decided by a lot drawn by the State Electoral Committee).

The voters were citizens of the Czech Republic who at least on the second polling day attained the age of at least 18 years and no legal impediment to the exercise of their right to vote occurred. Voters could exercise their right to vote in some of the permanent electoral wards in the territory of the Czech Republic or in a special electoral ward abroad, in which they were included in the electoral roll (list of voters). A voter could also vote in any permanent or any special electoral ward (i.e. in the Czech Republic or abroad) upon submission of an elector's certificate. A voter was also allowed to use special ways of voting (pursuant to the Act No 296/2021 Sb).

The seats were contested by twenty political parties and political movements, one coalition of two and one coalition of three political parties and political movements, i.e. 22 entities in total (hereinafter only referred to as the "party"), which had submitted their lists of candidates at least in one of the electoral regions. The lists of candidates contained names of the candidates in the descending order determined by the party for the allocation of seats won. The maximum number of candidates is limited by the Act; it is different depending on the respective electoral region.

To vote, a voter inserted one ballot paper of the selected party into an official envelope and then cast the envelope into the ballot box. Voters were allowed to show their preference for candidates by marking up to four ordinal numbers on the ballot paper with a circle. Such ballot paper represented one valid vote for the party provided that the voting procedure complied with the conditions determined by the Act.

Valid votes won by individual parties decided which parties were to distribute the determined number of seats among themselves. Only those parties, which reached the determined percentage of the total number of returned valid votes added up for all electoral regions, qualified for the scrutiny. The threshold is stipulated by the Act depending on the type of the list of candidates; it is 5% for a political party or a political movement standing for the election independently; for coalitions consisting

of two political parties or political movements it is 8% and for coalitions that are composed of three or more political parties or political movements it is 11%.

Seats were allocated to parties in two rounds of vote counting (scrutinies) by means of calculation pursuant to law and candidates of parties in electoral regions obtained them in the order in which they were listed in the ballot paper. However, when a candidate won preferential votes amounting to at least 5% of the vote for the party in the electoral region, a seat was allocated preferentially to that candidate. Non-elected candidates of parties that won a seat in an electoral region became substitutes.

The number of registered voters refers to the number of persons registered in electoral rolls (lists of voters) who meet prerequisites determined by law for the exercise of their right to vote or, in other words, active suffrage and persons kept in records of eligible voters pursuant to the Act No 296/2021 Sb.

The turnout is calculated as the share of the number of voting voters (persons who were issued an official envelope in the polling station or by a commission for voting) in registered voters (persons included in the electoral rolls (lists of voters) and in records of eligible voters).

Names of political parties and political movements, which are too long, have been shortened for the presentation in the 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 (clear) because of frequent changes (births of new political entities, changes of their names, changes in the composition of coalitions, etc.).

Due to rounding off (or showing data on percentages of valid votes to two decimal places without rounding off), the sum of percentages may not be equal to 100.

Tables include complete voting results including special ways of voting pursuant to the Act No 296/2021 Sb.

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

– www.czso.cz/csu/czso/elections_en

– www.volby.cz/index_en.htm