

II. POLITICAL TRANSFORMATION OF THE CZECH SOCIETY

II.1 Last Years of Czechoslovakia

Czechoslovakia's first free general parliamentary election since 1946 was held on 8-9 June 1990. Its constitutional system, inherited from the totalitarian regime, was rather complicated. Czechoslovakia (The Czech and Slovak Federal Republic) had a bicameral Federal Parliament with the House of the People (150 seats) and the House of the Nations (150 seats) and two republic parliaments: the Czech National Council (200 seats) and the Slovak National Council (150 seats). In the Czech Republic, 99 deputies of the House of the People were elected, and 51 deputies in the Slovak Republic. There was parity representation in the House of Nations: 75 deputies elected in the Czech Republic and 75 in the Slovak Republic. The National Councils were elected on a regional principle in the two republics. A curious voting rule in the Federal Parliament (to pass any bill, all three parts of the Federal Parliament – the House of the People, the Czech part of the House of Nations and the Slovak part of the House of Nations – had to independently agree to it). While during the totalitarian regime under the “leading role” and all-over supervision of the Communist Party this rule had not created any problems; in a new emerging democracy it contributed to constitutional deadlock.

In 1990 a proportional electoral system was introduced which discriminated against small parties and political formations: to

enter the Federal parliament a party had to collect at least 5 per cent of the total number of valid votes in at least one of the two republics. The same threshold (5 per cent on the national level) was required for entering the Czech regional parliament (Czech National Council), while only 3 per cent was required for entering the Slovak regional parliament (Slovak National Council). The country was divided into 12 voting districts (8 in the Czech Republic and 4 in the Slovak Republic) with multi-candidate lists presented by different parties. The number of seats for each district was proportional to the total number of valid votes in the district. Votes for the parties that did not overcome the 5 per cent (or 3 per cent) threshold were redistributed among parties that had succeeded, approximately proportionally to their received votes. Within each political party the candidates received the seats allocated to the party according to the order printed on the ballot. However, if at least one tenth of all voters casting a valid vote for the respective party in the electoral district used the right to a preference vote, the candidates who received preference votes from more than 50 per cent of those voters were moved to the top of the list. The voter was allowed to express preference for candidates by circling the numbers of at most four candidates listed on the ballot. The 1990 parliament representatives were elected for two-year terms only.

Czech and Slovak citizens with 96.3 per cent voter turnout approved a new organization of society and expressed their anti-totalitarian orientation. The broad coalition of the Czech and Slovak liberal civic movements (Civic Forum in the Czech Republic and the Public Against Violence in the Slovak Republic) which played a crucial role during the 1989 turnover of power, won an absolute majority in the Federal parliament. In the Czech parliament the Civic Forum won 63.5 per cent of seats, enough for the qualified majority required to pass constitutional laws. In the Slovak Parliament the partner of the Civic Forum, Public Against Violence, won 32.5 per cent of seats and together with the Slovak Christian Democratic Movement, which won 20.67 per cent of seats, it participated in the Federal government and formed the Slovak regional government. The situation has dramatically changed during 1991. Differentiation in former parties and coalitions led to fast diversification of political formations in all three parliaments. At the end of 1991 the number of factions in the Federal Parliament increased from 7 to 16, in the Czech Parliament from 4 to 11 and in the Slovak Parliament from 7 to 11. The time of the "Velvet Revolution" euphoria ended as the society approached the second parliamentary election in 1992.

The second (and last) parliamentary election in the Czech and Slovak Federal Republic in June 1992 confirmed the growing polarization of the Czech and Slovak societies that led to the dissolution of Czechoslovakia.

In June 1992, 35 political formations (parties and coalitions) competed for seats in the Federal Parliament, 19 formations competed for seats in the Czech National Council and 23 formations competed for seats in the Slovak National Council. Approximately 85 per cent of eligible voters took part in the election. About 26 per cent of valid votes were redistributed (votes for political formations that didn't succeed in getting more than 5, 7 or 10 per cent). Due to these thresholds only 14 political formations entered the parliaments (some of them in one house only).

From the data about the composition of the Federal Parliament, we can see the strong dominance of the two leading political powers – the right-centred Civic Democratic Party in the Czech Republic and the left-centered Movement for Democratic Slovakia in the Slovak Republic. This ideological inconsistency of the Czech and Slovak representations in the Federal parliament together with the lack of political experience and will on both sides to seek mutually acceptable compromises contributed to the (peaceful) separation of the country after 74 years of coexistence in a common state.

In December 1992, the country split and the Federal Parliament as the supreme parliamentary representation of the federal state was dissolved. As an unintended result of the 1992 regional Czech Parliament elections, the Czech National Council, the first parliament of the newly created Czech Republic, was elected.

Czech and Slovak Parliamentary Parties after the 1992 Elections

The Czech parties (coalitions):

LBL: Left Block, coalition of the Czech and Moravian Communist Party and Democratic Left Movement

ČSSD: Czechoslovak Social Democratic Party (after separation it became the Czech Social Democratic Party of left orientation)

LSU: Liberal Social Union (left-centrist coalition)

HSD-SMS: Movement for Self-Administration Democracy – Society for Moravia and Silesia (a Moravian regional party)

KDU-ČSL: Christian and Democratic Union – Czechoslovak People's Party (pro-reform centrist party)

ODS-KDS: coalition of Civic Democratic Party and Christian Democratic Party (Mr. Klaus, pro-reform right-center coalition)

ODA: Civic Democratic Alliance (pro-reform rightist party)

SPR-RSČ: Alliance for Republic – Czechoslovak Republican Party (extreme populist party)

The Slovak parties (coalitions):

SDL: Party of Democratic Left (former Communist Party with leftist social-democratic orientation)

SDSS: Slovak Social Democratic Party (Mr. Dubček)

HZDS: Movement for Democratic Slovakia (Mr. Mečiar)

SNS: Slovak National Party (the only parliamentary party with an explicit program for the separation of Slovakia)

KDH: Christian Democratic Movement (centrist pro-reform party)

MKDH-ESWS: coalition of Hungarian parties (right orientation)

II.2 Constitutional System after the Separation

The constitutional system of the Czech Republic consists of the Parliament and the President. The Parliament of the Czech Republic has two chambers: the Lower House (Poslanecká sněmovna) and the Upper House (Senát). The president is elected by both Houses of Parliament for five year terms and has restricted and mostly representative responsibilities. He appoints the Prime Minister and the members of the Government, Governor of the Central Bank, ambassadors and the Chief of Staff of the army and signs laws. He can return laws to the Lower House, but his veto can be overridden by an absolute majority of all the members of the Lower House.

The Lower House is the most important legislative body. It has the power to pass laws by a simple majority of the members present during any given session (providing the quorum is met), to cast a no confidence

vote against the government, and to override a veto of the President and of the Upper House.

According to stipulations in the constitution the Upper House has limited legislative action and is only authorized to act upon Lower House legislation. The Upper House has three options when faced with bills approved by the Lower House and must act within 30 days: accept by default (take no action); reject with a suspensive veto; or suggest amendments (in both cases by a simple majority). In the latter two instances, the Lower House can vote to either accept or reject the Upper House action by an absolute majority of all members of the Lower House. The Upper House can also initiate legislation. If the Lower House is dissolved, the Upper House assumes its functions until new elections are held.

State Representatives in 1999

***Václav Havel** (1936), dramatist, leader of the dissident movement in the 1970's and 1980's, founder of the Civic Forum in 1989 (a broad democratic coalition of political movements and parties), president of federal Czechoslovakia from 1989 to 1992, first president of the Czech Republic from 1993, reelected in January 1998 for a second five-year term.*

***Václav Klaus** (1941), economist, founder and chairman of the Civic Democratic Party from 1991, minister of finance of the federal government (1990-1992), first prime minister of the Czech government from 1992. Resigned in November 1997. In July 1998 elected chairman of the Lower House.*

***Miloš Zeman** (1944), economist, one of the founders of the Civic Forum in 1989, leader of the Czech Social Democratic Party. From 1996 to 1998 chairman of the Lower House, from August 1998 prime minister.*

***Libuše Benešová** (1948), graduated in philosophy, researcher, vice-chair of the Civic Democratic Party, in December 1998 elected chairwoman of the Upper House.*

II.3 Electoral System

The Lower House of Parliament has 200 members elected for four-year terms. A proportional electoral system is used for the Lower House which discriminates against small parties and political formations: to enter the parliament a party has to attain at least 5 per cent of the total number of valid votes cast nationally. Similarly, a coalition of two parties has to attain at least 7 per cent of valid votes, a coalition of three parties has to attain 9 per cent of valid votes, and a coalition of more than three parties has to attain at least 11 per cent of valid votes in order to enter the Lower House.

The country is divided into 8 voting districts and each party nominates an ordered list of candidates for the Lower House in each district. The party (or coalition) has to deposit 200,000 CZK in order to register in each voting district. The number of seats distributed in each district is proportional to the total number of valid votes in the district. If a party (or coalition) does not receive the minimum required share at the national level, then those votes are redistributed among the remaining parties approximately proportionally to the votes received in each corresponding electoral district. Within each political party, candidates receive the seats allocated to the party according to the predetermined order in which their names are listed on the ballot. However, if at least one tenth of all voters casting a valid vote for any one party in the electoral district use the right to a preference vote, the candidates who receive preference votes from at least 10 per cent of those voters are moved to the top of the list. A voter is allowed to express his/her preference for candidates by indicating a maximum of four candidates listed on the ballot. First, seats are distributed to parties

at the district level using a full quota allocation system. The quota is defined as the total number of valid votes in a district received by parties (or coalitions) which received the minimum required share of votes to enter the Lower House divided by the number of seats to be allocated in this district plus one. The total number of votes received by the party (or coalition) is divided by the quota, and the party receives the number of seats equal to the integer part of this ratio. The remaining seats are allocated on the national level.

The majority system (plurality run-off) with one representative for each constituency is used in electing the 81 members of the Upper House of Parliament. The Upper House members are elected for six years. To achieve a periodic replacement schedule in which 27 members are elected every two years, in the first election in 1996 one third of the members were elected for two years, one third for four years, and the remaining third for the full term of six years. Each political party can nominate one candidate in each of the 81 constituencies. Also, independent candidates can participate providing they submit a statement of support signed by at least 1,000 eligible voters from the relevant electoral constituency. Before registration each candidate has to deposit 20,000 CZK. After the election this deposit is returned to the candidates who received at least 6 per cent of valid votes in the constituency. A candidate is elected on the first ballot if he/she receives a simple majority of valid votes (at least 50 per cent plus one vote). If no candidate receives a majority on the first ballot, then the two candidates who receive the most votes from the first ballot rerun on the second ballot, and the winner on the second ballot is elected.

Major Political Parties in 1999

Shortly after the 1989, 66 different political parties and movements emerged on the scene, some of them with very non-transparent political orientation. The major political parties in 1999 are listed below and ordered according to their positions on ideological spectrum.

Czech and Moravian Communist Party (*Komunistická strana Čech a Moravy, KSČM*) – an extreme leftist unreformed postcommunist party; opposes Czech membership in NATO; founded in March 1990; successor to the former Communist party of Czechoslovakia, which was founded in 1921; has had representation since 1989.

Czech Social Democratic Party (*Česká strana sociálně demokratická, ČSSD*) – a left centrist pro-reform party of standard European social-democratic orientation; supports the membership of the Czech Republic in NATO; strongly advocates the Czech Republic's entry into the EU; successor to the former Czechoslovak Social Democratic Party which was founded in 1878 and forced to merge with the Communist Party in 1948; restored in March 1990; established the minority government in 1998.

Civic Democratic Party (*Občanská demokratická strana, ODS*) – a right-wing conservative party; a dominating member of government coalitions between 1992-1997; the driving force of economic and political transition during the first years following the establishment of the Czech Republic; supports Czech membership in NATO; holds a mild "Euro-sceptic" attitude toward the EU; founded in April 1991.

So-called **four-coalition** consists of:

Christian and Democratic Union - Czechoslovak People's Party (*Křesťanská a demokratická unie – Československá strana lidová, KDU-ČSL*) – a pro-reform centrist party of Christian-democratic orientation represented in government from 1990 to 1998; advocate of a "social market economy"; supports membership in NATO and in the EU; reformed successor of the former Czechoslovak People's Party which was founded in 1918; member of the National Front (communist dominated government formation) during the communist regime.

Union of Freedom (*Unie svobody, US*) – a newly created liberal right-center party; established in January 1998 by former members of the Civic Democratic Party who left the party after the governmental crisis in the end of 1997; advocate of radical economic transition with an appropriate legislative framework and of the regional self-administration along with Czech membership in NATO and in the EU; represented in the government during the first half of 1998.

Civic Democratic Alliance (*Občanská demokratická aliance, ODA*) – a right-wing liberal party; supports Czech membership in NATO and in the EU; represented in governments from 1992 to 1998; founded in December 1989; lost a significant amount of its influence in 1998.

Democratic Union (*Demokratická unie, DEU*) – a small right-wing conservative party; supports Czech membership in NATO and in the EU, advocates radical economic transformation and regional self-administration; founded in 1993.

II.4 New Electoral History of the Czech Republic

The last general parliamentary election in federal Czechoslovakia was held on June 5 – 6, 1992. At this time the Federal Parliament, the Czech National Council and the Slovak National Council were elected. In December 1992, the country split and the Federal Parliament as the supreme parliamentary representative of the federal state was dissolved. The new Czech constitution defined the Parliament of the Czech Republic as consisting of two chambers: the Lower House and the Upper House. The Czech National Council elected in June 1992 was transformed into the Lower House on January 1, 1993. The representatives elected in

1992 served for full four-year terms. Until November 1996 the Lower House temporarily performed the duties of the Upper House as well.

The first parliamentary election of the Lower House took place on May 31 – June 1, 1996. The first election to the Upper House took place during November 15-23, 1996. After the political and economic crises in 1997 a premature election for Lower House representatives was called on June 19-20, 1998. One third of the members of the Upper House were re-elected in November 1998.

Results of Elections for the Lower House

Party	1996		1998		1999	
	Seats	%	Seats	%	Seats	%
KSČM	22	11.0	24	12.0	24	12.0
ČSSD	61	30.5	74	37.0	74	37.0
KDU-ČSL	18	9.0	20	10.0	20	10.0
US	n.a.	n.a.	19	9.5	18	9.0
ODS	68	34.0	63	31.5	63	31.5
ODA	13	6.5	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.
SPR-RSČ	18	9.0	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.
ČSNS	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	1	0.5

Composition of the Upper House

Party	1996		1998		1999	
	Seats	%	Seats	%	Seats	%
KSČM	2	2.5	4	4.9	4	4.9
ČSSD	26	32.1	23	28.4	23	28.4
KDU-ČSL	14	17.3	17	21.0	17	21.0
ODS	32	39.5	26	32.1	25	30.9
ODA (+US)	7	8.6	11	13.6	11	13.6
Independent	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	1	1.2
Total	81	100.0	81	100.0	81	100.0

Government Coalitions

Since 1992 the government coalition has consisted of four right-centrist parties: the Civic Democratic Party (ODS), the Christian Democratic Party (KDS), the Christian-Democratic Union (KDU-ČSL) and the Civic Democratic Alliance (ODA). After the 1996 parliamentary election these three parties formed a minority coalition government, controlling 99 of 200 seats in the Lower House and 53 of 81 seats in the Upper House. The minority coalition was tolerated by the Social Democrats that abstained in the confidence vote. Out of 16 government offices, eight were held by the ODS, four by the KDU-ČSL and four by the ODA.

In 1997 the distribution of votes in the Lower House of Parliament slightly changed in favour of the government coalition. Three members of Parliament left the Czech Social Democratic Party for different reasons; one of them joined the Civic Democratic Party while the other two remained independent. One of these two independent members consistently voted with the opposition. The other voted independently, despite often siding with the government coalition. Therefore, important decisions were frequently dependent on this representative's vote. In July 1997, the government coalition won the confidence vote by one vote which was cast by this independent member.

Electoral preferences for political parties significantly changed during 1997 as growing criticism of the internal political and social development and of the economic problems that were for a long time neglected by the ruling coalition. Restrictive fiscal and monetary policies introduced in the spring of 1997 were accompanied only by cosmetic personnel changes in the government. Economic recession, a decrease in real incomes, the exchange rate crisis, and the crisis in the banking sector dashed false expectations raised by overly optimistic government propaganda.

In November 1997 the culmination of these problems led to the dissolution of the government coalition. During the Prime Minister's absence from the country, two smaller parties, the ODA and KDU-ČSL, withdrew from the coalition, and after President Havel's intervention the government resigned on November 30th. While the immediate reason for the government crisis was related to the unclear financing of the Civic Democratic Party, indicating possible corruption during privatization, the November collapse of the government reflected the general instability of the Czech political environment. Feelings of dissatisfaction held by a substantial portion of the population regarding recent economic development, disapproval of the leading coalition party's political style, friction among coalition parties, and power struggles among different segments of the Czech political establishment contributed to the fall of the government.

Observing growing animosity among politicians and the inability of political parties to agree on the composition of a viable government, President Havel appointed Mr. Josef Tošovský, the generally respected Governor of the Czech National Bank with no party affiliation, as the new prime minister on December 17, 1997. The new

government, not based on the parliamentary power of political parties, but supported by two small former coalition partners of the Civic Democratic Party (The Christian Democratic Union and Civic Democratic Alliance), was appointed by the President on December 30, 1997. After complicated negotiations and an explicit commitment by the government to hold premature parliamentary elections in the spring of 1998, the government received the support of the Lower House on January 28, 1998, despite the opposition of the Civic Democratic Party but with the unanimous approval of the Social Democrats.

In January 1998 the Civic Democratic Party and its parliamentary faction split and the members who opposed Chairman Klaus's interpretation of the political crisis as a coup against the party and were against him personally left the party and established a new party called the Union of Freedom. Economic decline continued in 1998. With a limited mandate the "provisional government" of Mr. Tošovský, while praised in public opinion polls by the public, did not have authority to initiate significant changes in economic policies.

In June 1998 premature elections for the Lower House was held. While the Czech Social Democratic Party achieved historical success as the party with the strongest popular support (almost one third of the voters cast their votes for the ČSSD), the Civic Democratic Party ranked as the second strongest party, losing only 2 per cent of electoral support compared to the 1996 election. Shortly after the election President Havel authorized the chairman of the winning Social Democrats, Mr. Zeman, to negotiate the composition of the new government. The Freedom Union, however, rejected any coalition with Social democrats. On the other hand, personal animosity among the leaders of the former coalition partners, the Civic Democratic Party, the Christian and Democratic Union and the Union of Freedom, proved to be an obstacle to establishing a right center majority coalition. A grand coalition of the ČSSD and ODS was explicitly excluded by the electoral programs of the both parties. A resolution to the deadlock was found in the so-called "opposition treaty" between the ČSSD and ODS. The ODS committed itself to tolerating a minority one party government of ČSSD in exchange for a dominating role in the Lower and Upper Houses and participation in preliminary consultations on important issues between the ČSSD and ODS. Having together a qualified majority in both houses of parliament, the ČSSD and ODS declared their intention to work together to stabilize the Czech political environment and to change the constitution and electoral law "to strengthen majority elements in the proportional electoral system." The abstention of the ODS in the confidence vote allowed the one party minority government of ČSSD to receive the support of the Lower House in August 1998.

A general dissatisfaction of the Czech public with the minority government, "opposition treaty", and economic and social development led to increased public support of the Czech and Moravian Communist Party (KSČM). By the end of 1999, ten years after velvet revolution, the party ranks as the second most popular one.

II.5 Regional Administration

The country is divided into 77 districts (okres) plus the capital Prague. A district has about 120 thousand inhabitants and covers about 1,000 square kilometres. District offices are responsible for state administration and their heads are appointed by the central government. The districts have no role in self-government. The district office is an appellate body to the municipal authorities, and it supervises the activities of the municipal offices. A district assembly is elected by municipal councils in each respective district to oversee the activities of the district office, to approve its annual budgets, and also to decide on the distribution of state grants among municipalities. The municipalities' representation in the assembly is proportional to the size of their population.

Below the district level there are 6,196 rural and urban municipalities, some 6 per

cent of which have the status of a town or city. Thirteen major cities have the administrative status of a "statutory city." The extraordinary position of Prague is reflected in the fact that the internal territorial organization and administration of the capital is regulated by a separate legislative act. Municipal councils are elected in the local elections by a proportional system.

District assemblies cannot be considered organs of self-government, but rather provisional institutions which function until a genuine regional self-government is in effect. The establishment of regional (provincial) authorities as the highest tier of territorial government was outlined in the 1992 Constitution of the Czech Republic. In 1997, after a long and controversial discussion about the rationality of regional reform and regional self-government, the Parliament of the Czech Republic decided to establish 14 regions with regional self-administration. The new regions and regional governments will be effective from the year 2000.

Statutory Cities in the Czech Republic

	Population*
Praha (Prague)	1,193,270
Brno	384,727
Ostrava	322,111
Plzeň	168,422
Olomouc	103,372
Liberec	99,794
České Budějovice	99,347
Hradec Králové	99,323
Ústí nad Labem	96,493
Pardubice	92,495
Havířov	87,363
Zlín	8,851
Opava	61,530
Karlovy Vary	54,671

* January 1, 1999

Source: CSO Statistical Yearbook of the Czech Republic 1999

Municipalities by Population Size

Population size	Number	%
1 – 499	3,739	59.9
500 – 1999	1,895	30.3
2000 – 4999	348	5.6
5000 – 9999	130	2.1
10000 – 19000	66	1.1
20000 – 49999	44	0.7
50000 – 99999	17	0.3
100000 –	5	0.1
Total	6,244	100.0

Sources: M. Illner, *Local and Regional Government in the Czech Republic*, Institute of Sociology, AV CR, Prague, 1996
 CSO Statistical Yearbook of the Czech Republic 1999

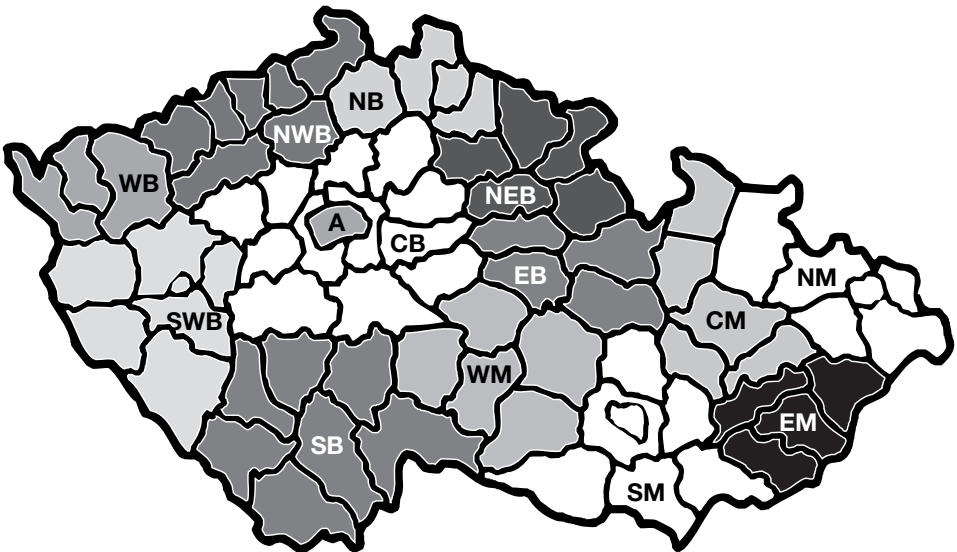
New Administrative Regions (kraje)

Region (kraj)*	Abbreviation on the Map	Region (kraj)*	Abbreviation on the Map
Prague	A	Hradec Králové	NEB
Central Bohemia**	CB	Pardubice	EB
České Budějovice	SB	Jihlava	WM
Plzeň	SWB	Brno	SM
Karlovy Vary	WB	Olomouc	CM
Ústí nad Labem	NWB	Ostrava	NM
Liberec	NB	Zlín	EM

* Regions are named after their centers

** Has its center in Prague

New Administrative Regions (Kraje) of the Czech Republic



Local Governments

Shortly after the fall of the communist regime, a new municipal system was introduced which was inspired by West European local government systems as well as by the pre-war system of local authorities in the Czechoslovak Republic. The general legal framework of the reform was laid down by a Federal Constitutional Law of July 1990. An additional constitutional foundation was provided by the Constitution of the Czech Republic, which was adopted in December 1992. The main aim of the reform was to break away from the Soviet-type system of territorial administration (National Councils on the local, district and province level, formally elected in a "no choice electoral system" and operating under the supervision of Communist Party regional organs) and to establish democratic local government.

The first local elections were held in November 1990, still in Federal Czechoslovakia, and then again in 1994 and 1998. The major elements of the specific proportional electoral system used in municipal elections are outlined as follows. Parties and other political formations present their lists of candidates. Each voter can either choose one party's list or select the required number of candidates for a given municipal council from the different lists. The term for municipal council is four years.

In the November 1998 municipal elections, the citizens elected members of 6184 local, rural and urban councils and 134 city councils, city district councils and city part councils of the capital Prague and 13 other statutory cities. Altogether 149 distinct groupings – parties, local coalitions and associations of citizens – participated in the elections. While in large cities electoral campaign platforms remained close to the political platforms of major parties, municipal elections in smaller places were focused less on ideology and more on local problems. Consequently, pre- and post-election coalitions, which would be unthinkable at the national level, were sometimes created at the local level. The results of the municipal elections provide a ranking

Results of Municipal Elections

Party	1994		1998	
	% of votes	% of seats	% of votes	% of seats
KSČM	13.4	9.2	13.6	9.2
ČSSD	8.1	2.4	17.5	6.8
KDU-ČSL	7.5	12.4	10.6	11.4
US	n.a.	n.a.	5.5	1.1
ODS	28.7	11.0	24.3	9.2
ODA	6.5	1.0	n.a.	n.a.
Independents	1.5	13.2	1.0	10.6
Others	34.3	50.8	27.5	51.7

Source: CSO

of parties that significantly differs from the results of parliamentary elections. The number of votes cast for a political party, coalition or association is given by the number of votes cast for their candidates; each voter is allowed a number of votes equal to the number of positions of the council in his/her municipality. Due to the different sizes of municipalities and the relatively small differences in the sizes of the councils, the aggregated number of seats in the elected councils is not proportional to the total number of votes cast for the different political groupings.