

Results

Narrow victory for the Social Democrats and breakthrough by the populists in the Czech general elections

The Czech political arena has been thrown into turbulence by the election results of 25th and 26th October. The Social Democratic Party (CSSD) led by former Finance Minister (2002-2006) Bohuslav Sobotka did indeed come out ahead in the election but with only 20.45% of the vote and 50 seats (-6 in comparison with the general elections on 28th and 29th May 2010). ANO 2011, a movement led by businessman Andrej Babis, managed to make an exceptional breakthrough winning 18.65% of the vote and 47 seats. The Communist Party of Bohemia and Moravia (KSCM) led by Vojtech Filip came third with 14.91% of the vote and 33 seats (+7). Tradition, Responsibility and Prosperity 09 (TOP 09), a centre-right party chaired by former Foreign Minister (2010-2013), Karel Schwarzenberg won 11.99% and 26 seats, (-15), the Democratic Civic Party (ODS) led by Martin Kuba, 7.72% and 16 seats, (-37), Usvit (Direct Democratic Dawn) led by Senator Tomio Okamura 6.88% and 14 seats, finally the Christian Democratic Union-People's Party (KDU-CSL) led by Pavel Belobradek will return to Parliament after a three year absence with 6.78% and 14 seats.

Although TOP 09 managed to win through as the country's party on the right, the rightwing did in fact collapse during this election winning slightly more than a quarter of the vote (26.49%), i.e. 14.8 points less in comparison with May 2010.

The Citizens' Rights Party (SPOZ), of President Milos Zeman won 1.51% of the vote i.e. below the vital 5% threshold necessary to enter parliament. The outgoing head of State therefore emerges weakened from the general elections when in all four voters in 10 (40.44%)

chose to give their votes to the populists.

Turnout totalled 59.48% i.e. - 5 points in comparison with the general election on 28th and 29th May 2010.

The general election came early after the self-dissolution of the chamber of deputies on 20th August, a first since the Czech Republic's independence in 1993. This followed the failure of Jiri Rusnok's government to gain parliament's confidence and also after the fall of the government coalition (TOP09 and the Liberal Democrats LIDEM) led by Petr Necas (ODS) on 10th July.

Election results of 25th and 26th October in the Czech Republic

Turn out: 59.48%

Political Parties	No. of votes	% of votes	No. of seats
Social Democratic Party (CSSD)	1 016 829	20.45	50
Ano 2011 (Yes 2011)	927 240	18.65	47
Communist Party of Bohemia and Moravia (KSCM)	741 044	14.91	33
Tradition, Responsibility, Prosperity 09 (Top 09)	596 357	11.99	26
Democratic Civic Party (ODS)	384 174	7.72	16
Usvit (Direct Democratic Dawn)	342 339	6.88	14
Christian Democratic Union-People's Party (KDU-CSL)	336 970	6.78	14
Others	662 259	12.62	0

Source : <http://www.volby.cz/pls/ps2013/ps?xjazyk=CZ>

General elections in Czech republic 25th and 26th October 2013

Jacques Rupnik, Researcher Director at CERI Sciences Po, qualifies Czech democracy as being "exhausted" adding, "the political system and the parties are disintegrating due to a lack of political content and the population's disgust at the incestuous links between politicians and businessmen, between the parties and the State."

"I believe that the ODS was expecting better results. It is the most pessimistic variant which prevailed. It is difficult to justify this result with certain failures or certain defeats. The party is experiencing major collapse right now," declared Martin Kuba.

The Social Democratic Party and the Communist Party only won 83 of the 200 seats in the Chamber of Deputies, i.e. below the minimum required if Bohuslav Sobotka's projects are to become a reality. "As the Social Democratic Party cannot form a coalition with the Communist Party it will be forced to come to an agreement with Ano 2011 (together the two parties have 97 seats)," said Josef Mlejnek, a political scientist and journalist, adding "the most probable variant is a coalition bringing together the CSSD and the KDU-CSL, with the support of the ANO 2011." Together the three parties have 111 MPs. "A possible coalition with the CSSD and Ano 2011, which is extremely critical about the traditional parties, would be highly unstable," stressed Jiri Pehe, Director of the University of New York in Prague. Pavel Saradin, a political scientist from the University of Olomuc indicated that if ANO entered government "it would not hold until the end of its four year term." "No government will be possible without the active or passive support of Ano 2011" stressed Tomas Lebeda, a political scientist from the Charles University of Prague. The CSSD is ruling out any government alliance with TOP09 and the ODS. "We are not going to make the same mistake as in 2010 (the party came out ahead without being able to put a government coalition together) when changes in leadership led to parties which did not win in the elections agreeing on the formation of a government without the CSSD. I suppose that the CSSD will be the strongest political party and within the new government it should have the greatest influence. If it remains in the opposition an exceptional congress would have to be organized and a new leadership would have to be elected," declared Bohuslav Sobotka.

"We do not want to enter government, we mainly want to have new laws approved by parliament," repeats Andrej Babis, ANO's leader who said he was pleased that he had "prevented the left from returning to power," adding "it is incredible how many people voted for us. We never hoped for such a high result." "I cannot imagine cooperating with the CSSD, given its programme. We need stability, low taxation and foreign investor confidence," he declared excluding cooperation with TOP09 and the ODS, which to his mind are synonymous with "corruption and mismanagement".

Ano 2011 was created on 11th May 2012 by Andrej Babis based on the Action Society for Discontented Citizens. Mr Babis, owner of the Agrofert group – the country's leading agrofood business and number 2 in the chemical industry, - as well as of Mafra, the biggest Czech press group (*Mlada fronta Dnes, Lidove noviny, Metro*, etc.), has a fortune estimated at 1.5 billion € (Andrejs Babis was ranked as the 736th richest man in the world by American magazine Forbes in 2013). The party is promising to reduce unemployment (which is affecting 7.3% of the working population), to have a strict control over the political classes and to fight against corruption without saying however how it would succeed in achieving its goals. Andrejs Babis, who in many ways recalls former President of the Italian Council, Silvio Berlusconi (he believes that "only those who have succeeded in life should be able to do politics" and maintains that he wants "to manage the country like a business"), maintains a populist discourse attacking politicians "who only worry about themselves" and whom he accuses of not doing any work. He believes that the Czech Republic "needs fundamental change and also a change in system" because the country is experiencing « pseudo-democracy ».

The issue of negotiations in view of forming a government will depend on the President of the Republic Milos Zeman. The head of State declared during the electoral campaign that he would appoint a representative of the party that came out ahead to the position of Prime Minister but not necessarily the leader of that party. Relations between Milos Zeman and Bohuslav Sobotka have been tense for the last ten years. In 2003, the present CSSD leader was, along with others against Milos Zeman's

candidature for the post of President of the Republic. *"It is an almost accepted fact that the head of State will try to appoint someone to his taste as Prime Minister,"* indicated Jiri Pehe. This might be Michal Hasek, who was just beaten by Bohuslav Sobotka during the vote for the party's leader on 15th and 16th March last. *"I want to make good the gap between Milos Zeman and the CSSD. Our country needs a leftwing government that will not go to war with a leftwing president over stupid issues of ego,"* indicated Michal Hasek.

The early general elections on 25th and 26th October therefore failed to settle the political crisis in the Czech Republic, which has been ongoing for several months now. *"The Czech Republic will inevitably have to hold*

further elections in one or two years' time," maintains Karel Schwarzenberg leader of TOP09. *"I fear that another early election is just around the corner because it will be particularly difficult to form a coalition in this parliament comprising seven parties,"* stressed Miroslava Némecová (ODS), former leader of the Chamber of Deputies.

President of the Republic Milos Zeman qualified the organization of new general elections to be "worst solution". *"All politicians, including myself, must assume their responsibilities and act to support of the establishment of a stable government,"* he said the day after the election. He said that he would appoint the future Prime Minister after the first session of Parliament that will take place on 25th November next.

You can read all of our publications on our site:
www.robert-schuman.eu

Publishing Director: Pascale JOANNIN

THE FONDATION ROBERT SCHUMAN, created in 1991 and acknowledged by State decree in 1992, is the main French research centre on Europe. It develops research on the European Union and its policies and promotes the content of these in France, Europe and abroad. It encourages, enriches and stimulates European debate thanks to its research, publications and the organisation of conferences. The Foundation is presided over by Mr. Jean-Dominique Giuliani.