

## PUBLIC ELECTION AS AN IMPORTANT PART OF DEMOCRACY

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### Abstract

*Public election is an important element of modern democracy. It is an achievement of democracy built on the State power sovereignty. This power is derived from the sovereignty of citizens, thus enabling citizens to participate in governance. Governance can be direct or indirect, based on a functioning system of regular free elections. The present article points to a change in preferences and degree of use of the right to participate in the presidential election as a voter. It also maps the current situation and expectations of Slovak citizens in relation to the new Head of State. For this purpose, we conducted an opinion survey in which we followed the respondents' attitude to the issue of the Head of state. Therefore, we try to draw conclusions from the results in this article.*

### Key words

*Constitution, Democracy, President, Public election, Voter*

**JEL Classification:** D72, H70, H11.

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### Introduction

Making decisions in everyday life is not easy. This is much more difficult if you have to decide on the fate of the country and its citizens. In the distant past, these decisions were made by monarchs. The common people could only dream of promoting their own proposals in this area. Over time, billions of people now have this right in many countries of the world. Modern democracy is built on the possibility of freedom of expression through public election. Thanks to it, the fate of the country is regrouped to the citizens of the State. It should be our responsibility to participate in its transformation and to actively address the burning issues. In this context, we looked at the results of the presidential elections held in 2019. At the same time, we conducted our own survey, which we compare with the official results of companies mapping satisfaction with the outcome of the presidential election.

#### 1. Public election as a tool for solving the State issue

Public election is a powerful decision-making tool based on collective preferences. Tullock (2008) refers to public election as a way of "using economic tools to solve traditional problems of political science". It is also important to realize the fact that, although it is a vote of individual, it rarely, almost never, decide about elections. In the context of collective decision-making, the integration of individual preferences into collective decision-making is

therefore important, which can be regarded as a fundamental pillar of public election. The mission of the public election is to enable citizens to participate in the administration of the State, to develop the principles of an open society and to eliminate unwanted issues in the community.

#### 1.1 Public elections as part of democracy

Democracy in modern understanding is characterised as people rule. It consists of possibility of expressing and deciding. The world's first known democracy (around the 5th - 4th centuries BC) is tied to Ancient Greece and its leader Cleisthenes. Cleisthenes introduced a system of political reforms in which the ancient Greeks were the first to advocate the idea of active participation and the role of citizen in state administration (Meiggs, 2013). To dispose of and use the freedom of the free people (Cartwright, 2018) can be described as a revolutionary idea of the ancient period. The unprecedented system of equality of votes of the free people (one voter = one vote) is so progressive that in terms of regularity and justice nothing has been invented to date more effectively. Within the current organization of the world, up to 99 states (50.25% of the world states) defined by the UN (own borders and fully independent government) are in favor of democracy.

In connection with the theory of public elections, it is also important to appeal to the reciprocity of the economy and politics. As stated by Kútik (2013), there is a parallel between the market

mechanism and the public election mechanism. Both mechanisms are built on buyers / clients and sellers. The market mechanism creates an economic market, with the intention of making a profit. The public election mechanism creates a political market that aims to achieve trans-individual goals, that is, the public interest. In both mechanisms there is competition for the client / customer and the production of goods (material / immaterial).

Involvement in the public election process can be described as the most important indicator of a democratic society. However, it remains true that even if the voter is the most important player in the public election, "he is largely ignorant of political issues" (Downs, 1957). The voter has its own system of evaluating the providers of goods (candidates). On this basis, it always chooses, as reported by Malý et al. (2012), "better" (for yourself). Voters cannot rationally assess the implications of such a decision (Kútik, 2011).

**Table 1. Obligatory turnout**

Country	Type of sanction				Comments
	1	2	3	4	
Argentina	x	x	x		
Australia	x	x			
Belgium	x	x	x	x	
Bolivia		x	x		18 years of age(married); 21 years of age (single).Mandatory voting by lawbut are yet to enforceit.
Brazil		x			
Bulgaria					Mandatory voting by lawbut are yet to enforceit.
Costa Rica					Mandatory voting by lawbut are yet to enforceit.
Democratic Rep. of the Congo					Mandatory voting by lawbut are yet to enforceit.
Dominican Rep.					Members of themilitary and national police cannotvote. Marriedpersonsregardless of age. Mandatory voting by lawbut are yet to enforceit.
Ecuador	x				Up to age 65.
Egypt	x	x			Mandatory voting by lawbut are yet to enforceit.
Gabon					Mandatory voting by lawbut are yet to enforceit.
Greece					Mandatory voting by lawbut are yet to enforceit.
Honduras					Mandatory voting by lawbut are yet to enforceit.
Lebanon					Excludesmilitarypersonnel. Mandatory voting by lawbut are yet to enforceit.
Liechtenstein	x	x			Up to age 70.
Luxembourg	x	x			
Mexico				x	Mandatory voting by lawbut are yet to enforceit.
Nauru	x	x			
Panama					Mandatory voting by lawbut are yet to enforceit.
Paraguay		x			Up to age 75.
Peru		x	x		Up to age 75.
Singapore		x	x	x	
Thailand					Mandatory voting by lawbut are yet to enforceit.
Turkey	x	x			
Uruguay		x	x		

Type of sanction: 1 Explanatioivs. Sanction , 2 Finesanction, 3 Disenfranchisement, 4 Ordersanction  
Source: ownprocessing by IDEA (2019)

His long-term interest in addressing political issues is absent. We believe that voter education is needed (Brooks, 2018, ACE, 2015). It is also necessary to emphasize the importance and

personal responsibility of the voter (Tuck 2008, OSCE, 2012, Acevedo, Krueger, 2004). However, if we misinterpret these facts, there may be an undesirable effect, the consequences

of which may be fatal. Significantly, voter decisions signify the participation model - the right of the citizen to vote versus obligatory voter turnout (Table 1).

*1.2 The President as one of the representatives of democracy*

The president is the supreme executive of the State and the Head of State. However, the universality of the post of president is not possible. It results from historical, geopolitical and many other contexts. For this reason, the real power of the President is classified as a presidential office with high powers and responsibilities (USA) and an office with relatively weak and largely ceremonial responsibilities and powers (the vast majority of Europe). In the second category, the Prime Minister (the "Executive Director") holds a strong executive position.

The second model applies in the Slovak Republic. According to the Constitution of the Slovak Republic (Act No. 460/1992), the President is a representative of the State and its Head, but the highest executive body is the government. Nevertheless, it is for the President to convene the constitutional meeting of the National Council of the Slovak Republic and its dissolution, appointment and dismissal of representatives and members of the government, central state administration bodies, professors, rectors, judges, to hold a referendum or to ask the government for information to perform its tasks.

However, we would like to draw attention especially to the change in presidential election method and putting the president into office. According to the original text of the Constitution of 1992, the election of the President was in the hands of representatives of the National Council of the Slovak Republic. The winner came from a secret election, requiring at least 3/5 of the constitutional majority (90 votes).

In practice, however, the election of the second democratic Slovak president has been stalled

(Table 2). During the 5 regular rounds of the election of the Head of State (subsequent rejection of new candidates) insufficient number of deputies participated in the electoral act. At that time, the post of President was held by the Prime Minister. Based on this fact, discussions were held as to whether the Slovak Republic needed such a post. Therefore, the way the Head of State was elected changed. The primary impetus was the impact of the Head of State election on constitutional conditions. That is why the Constitution was amended in 1998. Since this constitutional amendment, citizens have been directly involved in the election of the Head of State. The candidate for the post of the Head of State of the Slovak Republic must obtain an absolute majority of valid votes of all eligible voters. This should prevent the state that the Slovak Republic did not have a president. The amendment of the constitution also clarified the conditions for taking office. The President takes office at noon on the day of expiry of the mandate of the previous President by taking the oath by the President of the Constitutional Court of the Slovak Republic (formerly the President of the National Council of the Slovak Republic).

The author of this article maps the issue of public election. In this context, attention is paid in particular to the issue of the election of the President under the conditions of the Slovak Republic. When collecting and processing theoretical knowledge, information and data related to the issue, the author draws on the available sources. Analyzing and drawing conclusions leads to empiricism. The empiricism consists of the findings and analysis of the data resulting from our investigation. Respondents were addressed directly and through a distributed questionnaire with the intention of capturing a wider range of respondents (men-women, first-time voters). The results were processed using descriptive statistics and mathematical calculations. Tables were used to display the selected data. We have drawn conclusions based on deduction.

Table 2. Indirect election of the President of the Slovak Republic

Election	Candidate	Round No. 1	Round No. 1
		Number of votes	Number of votes
<b>1993</b>			
I.	Roman Kováč	69	78
	Milan Ftáčnik	30	31
	Anton Neuwirth	27	-
	Jozef Prokeš	17	-
II.	Michal Kováč	105	-
<b>1998</b>			
I.	Štefan Markuš	34	37
	Juraj Hraško	22	24
	Augustín Kurek	14	-
II.	Ladislav Ballek	49	50
	Milan Forgaš	5	0
III.	Milan Sečánsky	59	72
	Brigita Schmögnerová	43	47
	Zdeno Šuška	5	-
IV.	Vladimír Abrahám	13	-
V.	Otto Tomeček	86	86
VI.–IX.	-		

Source: own processing by ŠÚ SR

## 2. Data and methodology used in article

The article is based on the currently solved issue, which is the status of Public elections. Our goal is to highlight the relationship between citizens and head of state. When processing the theoretical knowledge and data related to the issue we were based on available resources related to the issue of Public election (print and electronic versions). We also used a questionnaire. We followed the respondents' attitude to the issue of the Head of state by The questionnaire. The questionnaire was distributed to 173 respondents who had the opportunity to comment on 6 closed questions. This questionnaire has been distributed citizens in print and electronic versions. The results were processed using mathematical calculations. In the final part of our work, we look at the conclusions we have drawn from the deduction.

## 3. Results and findings

The last election of the President of the Slovak Republic brings several firsts. These relate to the

number of candidates (15 candidates), the volume of money invested (candidates € 2.7 million, third parties € 0.9 million) and the degree of transparency (Act of the National Council of the Slovak Republic 181/2014 Coll. On election campaign).

In monitoring the issue of the relationship between the amount of money spent and public opinion we can talk about causality, which is not clear (Table 3). Nevertheless, it can be stated that without sufficient financial security it is very difficult to succeed in this kind of policy. On the other hand, it should be stressed that the current political situation and political marketing (media reality, streaming, etc.) significantly influence success / failure. Thanks to the Election Campaign Act, we had the opportunity for the first time to closely monitor the movements and sources of funding for the election campaign (candidate, third party). The obligation to disclose flows related to it in a separate account has significantly contributed to the transparency and openness of the process.

Table 3. Results related to the election of the President

Candidate	Round	Campaigne			
		Own finances [€]	Rank	Third party [€]	Rank
	Pre-election survey [%]	Result of election [%]			
<u>Béla Bugár</u>	-	382 861,72	4.	46 233,07	6.
	I.	4,1	5.	3,10	6.
<u>Zuzana Čaputová</u>	-	499 438,72	1.	158 741,14	3.
	I.	46,3	1.	40,57	1.
	II.	60,5	1.	58,40	1.
<u>Martin Daňo</u>	-	0	15.	0	-
	I.	0,3	11.	0,51	9.
<u>Štefan Harabin</u>	-	344 704,41	5.	-	-
	I.	11,7	3.	14,34	3.
<u>Eduard Chmelár</u>	-	32 039,80	11.	-	-
	I.	4,0	6.	2,74	8.
<u>Marian Kotleba</u>	-	55 655,63	10.	98 799,18	4.
	I.	9,5	4.	10,39	4.
<u>Milan Krajniak</u>	-	193 989,36	6.	94 466,30	5.
	I.	2,4	8.	2,77	7.
<u>József Menyhárt</u>	-	61 772,22	9.	16 926,89	7.
	I.	-	-	0,05	15.
<u>František Mikloško</u>	-	64 696,64	8.	-	-
	I.	4,0	6.	5,72	5.
<u>Robert Mistrík</u>	-	454 161,51	3.	227 799,83	2.
	I.	-	-	0,15	13.
<u>Maroš Šefčovič</u>	-	492 336,07	2.	262 533,23	1.
	I.	15,2	2.	18,66	2.
	II.	39,5	2.	41,59	2.
<u>Róbert Švec</u>	-	764,87	14.	-	-
	I.	0,3	11.	0,3	10.
<u>Bohumila Tauchmannová</u>	-	24 706,88	13.	-	-
	I.	0,5	9.	0,16	14.
<u>Juraj Zábajník</u>	-	73 178,94	7.	-	-
	I.	0,5	9.	0,28	11.
<u>Ivan Zuzula</u>	-	27 284,72	12.	-	-
	I.	0,3	11.	0,17	12.

Source: own processing by MV SR (2019), statistic.sk (2019)

Based on the results of the presidential elections, Zuzana Čaputová took office for 2019-2023. She is the first woman in this position since the establishment of an independent republic. More than 150 days have passed since her appointment. It is therefore possible to address the issue of citizens' satisfaction with the newly elected Head of State.

In the Trust Surveys (Focus, 2019 - The Trustworthiness of Political Leaders) we can speak of an increasing trend in the popularity and confidence of the Head of State. At the same time, we can say that from the first day of

joining the political scene and taking office, she managed to rank among the most trusted people in this environment (June 49%, September 56%). We achieved the same result in our investigation (59% of respondents). The results (Table 4) also show that up to 80% of respondents are satisfied with the outcome of the presidential election. Among the respondents, 68% of men and women would vote for Zuzana Čaputová when re-electing the head of state. Another positive finding is the fact that the elections are not indifferent to the citizens of the Slovak Republic (voter turnout: 48% of eligible voters - 1st round, 41% of eligible voters - 2nd round).

Table 4. Investigation results (September-November 2019)

Questions	18 – 23 years old				24-62 years old				more that 63 years old			
	women		men		women		men		women		men	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
Did you take part in the presidential elections?												
Yes	32	18,49	27	15,60	31	17,91	34	19,65	5	2,89	4	2,31
No	14	8,09	8	4,62	5	2,89	6	3,46	0	-	1	0,57
Undecided	0	-	2	1,15	1	0,57	3	1,73	0	-	0	-
Are you satisfied with the outcome of the presidential election?												
Yes	39	22,54	32	18,49	29	16,76	34	19,65	3	1,73	2	1,15
No	5	2,89	4	2,31	2	1,15	2	1,15	2	1,15	3	1,73
Undecided	2	1,15	1	0,57	6	3,46	7	4,04	0	-	0	-
Would you vote in the presidential election again?												
Yes	40	23,12	30	17,34	27	15,60	30	17,34	5	2,89	4	2,31
No	3	1,73	1	0,57	2	1,15	2	1,15	0	-	0	-
Undecided	3	1,73	6	3,46	8	4,62	14	8,09	0	-	1	0,57
Would you vote the same?												
Yes	32	24,06	23	17,29	29	21,80	27	20,30	5	3,75	4	3,00
No	0	-	4	3,00	2	1,50	5	3,75	0	-	0	-
Undecided	0	-	-	-	-	-	2	1,50	0	-	0	-
Would you elect a candidate other than the current head of state?												
Yes	7	4,04	5	2,89	3	1,73	8	4,62	2	1,15	5	2,89
No	33	19,07	28	16,18	30	17,34	30	17,34	3	1,73	0	-
Undecided	6	3,46	4	2,31	4	2,31	5	2,89	0	-	0	-
Do you consider the President as a trust worthy person?												
Yes	25	14,45	23	13,29	24	13,87	24	13,87	4	2,31	3	1,73
No	3	1,73	3	1,73	5	2,89	9	5,20	0	-	1	0,57
Undecided	18	10,40	11	6,35	8	4,62	10	5,78	1	0,57	1	0,57

Source: Focus, 2019 - The Trustworthiness of Political Leaders

On our results we can conclude that citizens are satisfied with the outcome of the presidential election. The popularity of our head of state is growing. Citizens continue to be interested in public affairs. On the other side, it is necessary to increase interest and participation in elections. Young voters notoriously neglect the importance of voting, but their voice is an important one on both sides of the aisle. Young people are the next generation in politics, and they should be involved to vote. When new generation understand politics, then they are able to do politics in the future better. Young people should be involved in training to take over the world when the older generation passes away. On the other side, we need people in older generations to be mentors, to guide political newcomers through the process of becoming involved. Participating in politics is difficult and often scary.

### Conclusion

The post of the President of the Republic is a significant post. In addition to representing the country, it is also an indicator of democracy within the country. The possibility to intervene in its selection has different forms. The Slovak Republic experienced its choice in both indirect and direct form. We appreciate the fact that the citizens of the State elect this representative for themselves to this day. While participation in this act is not as great as we would like, it is nevertheless the best that we have achieved so far. The political situation is one of the keys we make when choosing a candidate for this post. The current situation presents the need for new direction and faces. This fact is confirmed not only by the results of the election itself, but also by other investigations or surveys. On the other hand, I call for the possibility of participating in elections to become a personal duty. Voters, and young voter especially, have the power to alter political future for the better. By losing this right we could get back a few decades, which would

not have a positive impact on the development and growth of the country, population and democracy. Voting in not only the presidential elections but also local elections is a practice that the young adults need to take up. People who do not vote have no right to complain about the state of the government or the policies being passed. It is time to take the country in our control.

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