

# Czech Republic's 2010 elections and foreign development cooperation

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**Abstract:** *This study deals with one of the integral parts of the Czech foreign policy — foreign development cooperation — and its role in the Czech Republic's 2010 general elections. The paper conducts an analysis of seven relevant Czech political parties' election manifestos and programmes in relation to the agenda of foreign development cooperation. It aims to explore and compare how political parties have addressed the issue of foreign development cooperation and what importance they have attached to it. The subject of analysis includes five political parties that have won seats in the Chamber of Deputies of the Czech Parliament in 2010 (the Czech Social Democratic Party, the Civic Democratic Party, the TOP 09, the Communist Party of Bohemia and Moravia and Public Affairs) and two political parties that had been represented in the Chamber of Deputies in the previous term, but did not achieve the required 5 % election threshold in 2010 (the Christian Democratic Union-Czechoslovak People's Party and the Green Party).*

**Keywords:** *Czech Republic, Political Parties, 2010 General Elections, Election Campaign, Election Programme, Foreign Development Cooperation*

## Introduction

The Czech Republic has been a donor of foreign development cooperation, being — as a member of the European Union and Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development — “aware of its belonging to the developed part of the world” (*Ministerstvo zahraničních věcí ČR* 2010: 3). Considering foreign development cooperation one of the integral parts of its foreign policy (*Ministerstvo zahraničních věcí ČR* 2010: 6), by the means of foreign development cooperation the country “shows solidarity with people in poor, less developed countries and feels its part of responsibility for solving global problems that are to a great extent related to poverty” (*Ministerstvo zahraničních věcí ČR* 2010: 3).

This study deals with foreign development cooperation and its role in the Czech Republic’s 2010 general elections that took place on the 28<sup>th</sup> and 29<sup>th</sup> of May 2010. It attempts to answer the following research question “What role did the issue of foreign development cooperation play in the election manifestos of relevant Czech political parties in the 2010 Czech general elections?” The paper conducts a qualitative analysis of contents of seven relevant Czech political parties’ election manifestos and programmes — that were presented in the run-up to the 2010 general election — in relation to the agenda of foreign development cooperation. It will consider both explicit and implicit references to the issue of foreign development cooperation.

Using these election programmes as units of analysis, the paper aims to explore and compare how political parties, as key actors in agenda setting and shaping the political discourse, addressed the issue of foreign development cooperation and what importance they attached to it when competing for the 2010 general elections. The wider aim of the paper is to contribute to both scientific and general debate on the foreign development cooperation and the role of political parties in this policy area which tends to be rather neglected and modest in the Czech Republic’s environment.

In the 2010 elections, a total of 25 parties and 5,000 candidates competed for seats in the lower house of the Czech parliament — the Chamber of Deputies (Volby 2010). The subject of analysis includes five political parties that have won seats in 2010 elections — the Czech Social Democratic Party (*Česká strana sociálně demokratická, ČSSD*), the Civic Democratic Party (*Občanská demokratická strana, ODS*), the TOP 09 (*Tradice, Odpovědnost, Prosperita* — Tradition, Responsibility, Prosperity), the Communist Party of Bohemia and Moravia (*Komunistická strana Čech a Moravy, KSČM*) and Public Affairs (*Věci veřejné, VV*) and two political parties that had been represented in the Chamber of Deputies in the previous term, but did not achieve the required 5 % election threshold in 2010 — the Christian Democratic Union-Czechoslovak People’s Party (*Křesťanská a demokratická unie — Československá strana lidová, KDU-ČSL*) and the Green Party (*Strana zelených, SZ*). The order of analysis

will be based on the percentage of the votes received, starting with the political party that secured the highest number.

According to the research aims, the paper has the following structure. It starts with a brief introduction of key concepts used in the study. Afterwards, the main part, divided into seven chapters, follows with a detailed analysis of the contents of the seven political party election programmes, examining how political parties addressed the issue of foreign development cooperation through their 2010 election manifestos' content. Finally, the conclusion summarizes the main results and findings of the research.

## 1 Introduction of Key Concepts

Turning to the key concepts used in the analysis, election programmes of political parties are “important primary political documents and are recognisable as declarations of intent” (McGarry, Hainsworth and Gilligan 2008:1). The paper understands them as official party documents published during the election campaign (Laver 2001: 72), serving as “the most significant and effective communication tool of the party” and containing “plans, strategies and tactics for the political thoughts and beliefs on governing the country” (Inan and Sancar 2009). Ramachandra Murty provides yet another definition of a political party election programme as a “planned programme set out by the party covering the solutions to varied problems of the country in the national and international field” (Murty 2001: 104). He further views a political party election programme as “a charter of assurances and promises of a political party on the basis of which, it solicits voters” and “a document that tells the voters what the political party would do for the people and the country if it is voted to the power” (Murty 2001: 104).

Ece Inan and Asli Sancar identify the purpose of political party election programmes as follows: “As a communicative tool or content, the party manifesto is prepared in order to both increase the percentage of votes and explain the programmes and aims of the party to all audiences. It is obvious that the political party has to develop a specific manifesto which is able to convey all the important thoughts, aims and political principles, and on the other hand it should be comprehensive and as dynamic as to keep up with the changing conditions which can affect the country's domestic politics and international relations as well” (Inan and Sancar 2009). Aidan McGarry, Paul Hainsworth and Chris Gilligan further stress the significance of election pledges made by political parties in their election programmes: “By stating their commitments [...] political parties are making de facto promises, meaning that the language carries with it tacit understandings to realise certain goals, outcomes and policies” (McGarry, Hainsworth and Gilligan 2008: 1). Moreover, their practical

political relevance stems from the fact that “party leaders can be attacked for failure to implement published manifesto policies if given the chance to do so” (Laver 2001: 72).

Hence, political party election programmes have been long a subject to extensive empirical research (Laver 2001: 72). Indeed, analysis of political party election programmes is considered “a fruitful way of gaining insight into the positions of political parties in one policy space” (Mair 2001; Laver 2001 cited in Van Gijssel and Vogel 2003: 2).

As to the concept of foreign development cooperation, the paper deals primarily with foreign development cooperation, not humanitarian aid. Since both expressions are often used mistakenly and interchangeably, it is useful to define what this analysis understands by the term *foreign development cooperation*. A broad definition views foreign development cooperation as “all resources — physical goods, skills and technical know-how, financial grants (gifts), or loans (at concessional rates) — transferred by donors to recipients” (Riddell 2007: 17). A narrower definition of foreign development cooperation refers to its purpose and conceives it as “that part of foreign aid whose purpose is to contribute to human welfare and development in poor countries” (Riddell 2007: 18).

*The Czech Law on International Development Cooperation and Humanitarian Aid* which came into effect in July 2010 as well as the *Concept Paper of Czech Development Cooperation for the 2010–2017 Period* approved in May 2010 define foreign development cooperation as a “body of activities covered by the state budget which aim to contribute to poverty elimination in the context of sustainable development, including meeting the Millennium Development Goals, economic and social development and environmental protection, as well as support of democracy, human rights protection and good governance of public affairs in developing countries” (*Sbírka předpisů České republiky 2010, Ministerstvo zahraničních věcí ČR 2010: 3*).

Another important distinction to make is the difference between two basic types of foreign development cooperation: bilateral and multilateral. While bilateral is provided from one country directly to another by means of its own development cooperation projects, multilateral aid is channelled through international organisations and agencies such as, for example, the World Bank or the United Nations (Brown 2009: 135; De Haan 2009: 27). On average, Western countries channel about one third of their foreign development cooperation through multilateral organisations (Dengbol-Martinussen and Engberg-Pedersen 2005: 64–65, 94). As we will see further on, Czech political parties paid attention to both types of foreign development cooperation in their 2010 election programmes.

Last but not least, the author keeps in mind the difference between the terms *foreign development cooperation* and *foreign development aid* or *assistance* and is aware of the development community’s preference to avoid the term *aid*, as it suggests un-

desired imbalance, hierarchy, dependency and paternalism in relationships between donors and recipients (Triulzi and Montalbano 2001:4; United Nations Economic and Social Council 2008: 22). Yet, in the analysis, the author is obliged to use these terms (though often incorrectly) in accordance with the respective political parties' preferences.

## 2 Analyses of Political Parties' Election Programmes

### 2.1 The Czech Social Democratic Party

The left-wing Czech Social Democratic Party gained most votes in the 2010 legislative elections by gaining 22.1 % (56 seats in the 200-seat Chamber of Deputies). The party published 17 so called Orange Books in which it set out its election priorities and strategic directions in 17 thematic areas. In the *Orange Book on Foreign Policy* two lines are dedicated to the development policy. Party's priorities within this field can be defined as "1) Support of democratization of unstable states which should lead to stabilization and economic development and consequently to security and conflict prevention; 2) Fight against extreme poverty — fulfilment of the Millennium Development Goals)" (*Česká strana sociálně demokratická* 2010a). Based on these lines, it can be argued that the party tends to be rather vague without proposing any concrete solutions. It also shows that the Social Democrats view foreign development cooperation primarily as a means how to ensure national security and prevent conflicts.

In another of the party's 2010 campaign materials, the *Programme of Change and Hope*, no expressions such as development cooperation or developing country are to be found. The programme only states that the party supports higher proportion of European Union's participation in safeguarding international security via the new European External Action Service and the Common Foreign and Security Policy (*Česká strana sociálně demokratická* 2010b: 31–32). According to the Czech Social Democratic Party, this is the only way to face today's and future security threats such as regional war conflicts, failed states, higher migration of population from unstable areas, negative effects of global warming, threats to energy security, organized crime and terrorism (*Česká strana sociálně demokratická* 2010b: 31–32). As we can see, this 'appeal' is directed to the European Union as a whole and neither refers to, nor mentions the sole responsibility of the Czech Republic.

### 2.2 The Civic Democratic Party

The centre-right Civic Democratic Party gained 20.2 % in the Czech 2010 elections which translated into 53 seats. The party addresses foreign development coop-

eration more extensively than its main rival, the Czech Social Democratic Party. In the Civic Democratic Party's 2010 election programme entitled *Solutions that Help*, a whole paragraph is dedicated to the issue of development cooperation. The party calls for a more effective and professional system of development aid provision, as it believes that afterwards it "will be able to prepare a unified concept that reflects priorities and interests in political and economic areas" (*Občanská demokratická strana* 2010: 45). By multilateral development cooperation, the party understands predominantly the Czech participation in the European Union development cooperation policy. The party puts emphasis on the Czech Republic's interests by claiming that: "In terms of our interests we should pursue two goals — first, to provide direct help and support to Czech subjects seeking to take part in projects and tenders offered by the European Commission, and second, to participate in preparation of programmes and settings so that they correspond with our priorities and concern the areas in which Czech subjects have good chances to succeed" (*Občanská demokratická strana* 2010: 45).

Another section of the election programme relating to the developing world concerns agricultural trade. The party campaigns for the liberalization of world's agricultural trade, as it aims to pursue a policy with minimum limitations and regulations and to support further liberalization of world's agricultural trade (*Občanská demokratická strana* 2010: 43). The Civic Democrats supports abolition of export subsidies that only deepen problems of the developing world (*Občanská demokratická strana* 2010: 43).

It is interesting to note that the party programme does not make a distinction between the terms *development cooperation* and *development aid* and uses both notions interchangeably. Also, when dealing with the development cooperation issues, the party substantially emphasizes Czech interests.

### 2.3 TOP 09

As a new political entity that participated in general elections for the first time in history, the conservative TOP 09 came in third in the 2010 elections with 16.7 % of votes translated into 41 seats.

The party election programme, *2010 Election Programme — 2010 Elections to the Chamber of Deputies*, briefly deals with the issue of foreign development cooperation. The TOP 09 is determined to conduct meaningful and effective development aid in order to strengthen the Czech Republic's position (TOP 09 2010: 15). This aid should be to the greatest possible extent "built on the principle of aid through trade and not instead of a charity" (TOP 09 2010: 15). According to the party, Czech foreign policy should take the development cooperation policy into account. Within the European Union, the party will try to eliminate protectionist barriers

that inhibit developing countries from exporting their products to the European markets (TOP 09 2010: 15). Throughout its election programme, the TOP 09 uses exclusively the term *development aid*.

#### **2.4 Communist Party of Bohemia and Moravia**

With 11.3 %, the leftist Communist Party of Bohemia and Moravia gained 26 seats in the Chamber of Deputies. The Communist Party does not address issues concerning development cooperation or developing countries in its *Open Election Programme of the Communist Party of Bohemia and Moravia for the Elections to the Chamber of Deputies of the Parliament of the Czech Republic 2010* at all (*Komunistická strana Čech a Moravy* 2010). Although the party states that human rights should be respected (*Komunistická strana Čech a Moravy* 2010), it does not tackle the issue in the context of foreign development cooperation.

#### **2.5 Public Affairs**

Winning 10.9 % of the votes and 24 seats, the centrist Public Affairs political party, was the last party to gain seats in the Chamber of Deputies. In the development cooperation realm, the same pattern as in case of the Communist Party of Bohemia and Moravia applies to the Public Affairs and its *Political Programme*. The party briefly addresses the issue of human rights acknowledging their universal character (*Věci veřejné* 2010), but similarly to the Communist Party of Bohemia and Moravia or the Christian Democratic Union-Czechoslovak People's Party, it does not deal with it from the foreign development cooperation's perspective (*Věci veřejné* 2010).

#### **2.6 Christian Democratic Union-Czechoslovak People's Party**

The Christian Democratic Union-Czechoslovak People's Party has failed to win sufficient support in the 2010 elections and with 4.4 % of the vote the party has not managed to exceed the 5 % threshold required to enter the lower house. In its *2010–2014 Election Programme*, the party does not mention the issue of development cooperation at all. It does briefly deal with the issue of human rights believing that the European Union should pursue unified standards when judging quality of human rights in third world countries and incorporate the duty to observe human rights into business treaties (*Křesťanská a demokratická unie — Československá strana lidová* 2010). The party, however, does not consider the human rights theme in the context of foreign development cooperation (*Křesťanská a demokratická unie — Československá strana lidová* 2010).

## 2.7 The Green Party

The Green Party has presented the most extensive and elaborated programme on foreign development cooperation of all political parties. Yet, with the result of 2.44 % of the votes it has not crossed the parliamentary threshold in 2010 and thus has fallen short of acquiring seats in the Chamber of Deputies.

The section on foreign development cooperation of the *Green Party's Election Programme — Elections to the Chamber of Deputies 2010* bears the name *Development Cooperation — Let's Help More and Better*. The development cooperation section starts with a brief evaluation of the present state of the Czech development cooperation by claiming that a lot has been improved, but the system is still going through a period of transformation (*Strana zelených* 2010: 74). The party is critical of the current condition of the Czech development aid provision and considers the fact that European governments, including the Czech, fail to help poor countries at times when developing countries have to face severe effects of economic crisis to be a serious problem (*Strana zelených* 2010: 74). The programme states that in 2009 the Czech Republic devoted 0.11 % of its Gross national income (GNI) to the Official Development Assistance (ODA) accounting to approximately 3.63 billion CZK (*Strana zelených* 2010: 74). The party makes a comparison arguing that this figure amounted to two thirds of a car scrappage scheme that the Czech government was considering at that time (*Strana zelených* 2010: 74).

The Green Party further advocates an increase of the Czech official development aid volume in compliance with the new European Union member states' commitments according to which they must strive to increase their ODA ratio to 0.17 % GNI in 2010 and 0.33 % in 2015. In the same logic, the Greens oppose any decrease of the funding allocated for development goals due to the economic crisis (*Strana zelených* 2010: 74). Their long-term target is to provide 0.7 % of GNI as a development aid. At the same time, they stress that "the volume of the development aid should not be the only criterion, it is necessary to increase not only its quantity, but especially quality. The Greens will campaign for the resources devoted to development aid to be invested predominantly in poor countries and support projects that will strengthen local communities' own resources, conditions and capacities for sustainable development and responsible politics" (*Strana zelených* 2010: 74). Also, the Green Party presents a very clear request to use the available resources to fight extreme poverty and secure basic human needs and rights instead of supporting Czech exports (*Strana zelených* 2010: 74).

Nonetheless, the Green Party views the development cooperation in a wider context (Glopolis 2010: 14) and stresses that official development aid alone cannot address all the needs of a developing world and eliminate poverty on its own. Although the Greens consider it an important and still unsubstitutable means of cooperation with poor countries, they are simultaneously aware of its complementarity and tem-



porality: “Sustainable development of poor countries must be built firstly on their own resources, economy and political decisions. Development cooperation must not deepen poor countries’ dependency, but it should help strengthen their abilities to safeguard their own development and create international economic rules and political conditions that support such a development” (*Strana zelených* 2010: 75).

Furthermore, as presented in its election programme, the Green Party wants the right for groceries, water and access to energy, as well as the right for education, health care and own culture to become an integral part of the Czech foreign development policy (*Strana zelených* 2010: 73). In the similar manner, the party strives for the Czech Republic to “respect even the poorest countries’ right for satisfactory political space to make their own decisions and not support the pressure for liberalization, privatization and market deregulation in these countries at all costs” (*Strana zelených* 2010: 75). The party also deals with aborigines viewing them as the most marginalized and poorest groups of people in the world. The Green Party thus supports their efforts to ensure human rights, self-determination, territorial rights and rights to develop their own lifestyle (*Strana zelených* 2010: 75).

Another foreign development aspect featured in the Green Party election manifesto concerns the need for greater coherence in policies across sectors that affect developing countries. The Party considers this topic both in the Czech Republic’s and European Union’s context. The Greens lay emphasis on the necessity for coherence between Czech and European Union-level foreign policies, development cooperation policies, democratization assistance and transformation cooperation, as well as a narrower linkage between the European Union development policy and priorities of the Eastern partnership (*Strana zelených* 2010: 73). Also, solely in the European Union context, the Green Party stresses the need for stronger coherence between European Union development policy and its other policies that currently often work at cross-purposes, as it will *inter alia* subsequently reinforce the European Union’s position and its positive perception in the world (*Strana zelených* 2010: 73).

Based on the fact that every year the efflux of capital from developing countries exceeds several-fold the official development aid, the Green Party wants the Czech Republic to support establishment of transparent international rules that will prevent tax evasions and commercial machinations and limit inconvenient speculative investments that threaten the economic stability of the poorest countries’ (*Strana zelených* 2010: 75). According to the party, higher transparency of international finances will consequently present a positive contribution for the Czech financial sector as well (*Strana zelených* 2010: 75).

Last but not least, the party addresses the issue of gender equality — not only in the context of development and humanitarian aid, but also in the context of human rights issues, transformation cooperation and civil and military missions (*Strana zelených* 2010: 75). Stating that women account for 70 % of the poor people worldwide

and often become manifold victims of catastrophes, conflicts and discrimination, the Green Party believes that for the effective restoration and democratic development of society, the role of both men and women is crucial (*Strana zelených* 2010: 75).

As to the usage of development cooperation terminology, the party uses half-and-half terms of development cooperation and development aid.

## Conclusion

Trying to answer the research question “What role did the issue of foreign development cooperation play in the election manifestos of relevant Czech political parties in the 2010 Czech general elections?”, this paper has examined the extent to which the issue of foreign development cooperation has been incorporated into the political parties’ election manifestos competing for the 2010 Czech general elections. It aimed to review and compare relevant Czech political parties’ election programmes, to identify similarities and differences in political parties’ approaches to the issue of foreign development cooperation and to assess what importance they attached to this issue when competing to the 2010 general elections.

The qualitative analysis of contents of political party election programmes has demonstrated that even though the development cooperation agenda has appeared in programmatic commitments of major political parties, usually only a few lines (often in rather vague terms) have been devoted to this topic, with a number of standard development cooperation issues being left out (Glopolis 2010: 4). A typical feature of Czech political parties’ development agendas includes substantial simplifications (see for example, *aid through trade instead of a charity* by the TOP 09) (Glopolis 2010: 4), incorrect usage of terminology, confusion of terms and overly partial focus on a few selected aspects of foreign development cooperation (Glopolis 2010: 15–16). In general, the political parties usually make no distinction between the terms of development cooperation and development aid. Also, despite referring to both forms of foreign development cooperation (bilateral and multilateral), political parties tend to put much more emphasis on bilateral aid. There is also a prevailing tendency to perceive development cooperation as a “distant issue” and a means to secure the country’s commercial and security interests.

Yet, as it has been shown, Czech political parties’ programmatic contents and policy positions differ widely when it comes to the relevance of the foreign development cooperation. While, for example, the Green Party has elaborated a relatively detailed, complex and consistent chapter on foreign development cooperation, the Communist Party of Bohemia and Moravia or the Public Affairs have largely ignored the issue. Indeed, the Green Party surpasses all the other analysed political parties, since — as the only Czech political party — it has come up with a comprehensive programme

on the foreign development cooperation. The second most detailed programme on development cooperation in the 2010 general elections campaign has been presented by the Civic Democratic Party, but it is far less elaborated than the Green Party's.

Briefly put, study of political parties' policy positions through analysis of their election programmes reveals that international development issues played a rather marginal role in the 2010 elections to the lower house of the Czech Parliament. There are a number of potential explanations for the development cooperation playing such a minor role in the Czech political arena, including low public awareness, political immaturity and tight budgets (Hecová, Jana 2007; Horký 2006: 5–6). Also, as a rule, political parties prefer to focus on domestic social and economic issues such as pension reform, the fight against corruption or public finances, rather than on foreign policy (Chaly 2002: 22). In return, it can be argued that marginalization of a development cooperation agenda and lack of political interest and will to promote the importance of foreign development policy and engage more in the area is one of the reasons why the Czech Republic has not been able to fulfil its commitments in the field of foreign development cooperation made at the international level (*České fórum pro rozvojovou spolupráci* 2010; Lightfoot and Zubizarreta 2008: 10).

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