Electoral Systems and Voting Behaviour: The Case of the House of Deputies' Elections in the Czech Republic[1]

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Abstract: *Election behaviour is the result of many influences. The decision to vote for a particular party depends on various factors, ranging from the voter's social status and income to the structure of political options and the impact of the election campaign. These factors may include the electoral system as well. Especially when the voters are familiar with the operation of the electoral system, they can adjust their choice to the assumed effect. This paper examines the relation between the effect of the electoral system on the representation of the parties and candidates and the electoral behaviour of the voters in elections to the House of Deputies of the Parliament of the Czech Republic, especially in the latest elections in 2006. The system of proportional representation used in the Czech Republic leads to disproportional representation of the parties. Voters have known one of the causes – legal threshold – for a long time. The other cause – the natural threshold – is a recent phenomenon. Differences in knowledge result in the fact that when the voters make a decision, they think about it, while in the other case they probably often do not even suspect its existence. Another element to which the voters have become already accustomed and which is in increasing use is the possibility to give preferential votes, which can alter the order of the candidates in the party list. With the assistance of dates from election statistics and data from the survey: Czech Election Study 2006, the author analyzes the consequences of the three components of the electoral system: legal threshold, natural threshold, and preferential personal voting.*

Keywords: *Electoral system, Voting behaviour, Electoral threshold, Czech Republic, Proportional representation.*

Introduction

The electoral system is one of the major factors in the formation of party systems. It can affect the number of parliamentary parties, the proportionality of their representation and the degree of their competition or cooperation. The electoral system thus indirectly influences the electoral strategy of the party and, last but not least, the strategy of the voters' decisions. In the Czech Republic, for the elections to the House of Deputies, the system of proportional representation was introduced, even though it does not always produce purely proportional results. The mechanism is proportional but the representation of the parties in the House of Deputies shows some disproportions, which are manifested by overrepresentation of the larger and under-representation or absolute non-representation of the smaller parties. This paper discusses the impact of the electoral system on the election result but it will mainly concentrate on those consequences of the electoral system that interfere with or directly affect the voters' decisions. These facts will be analyzed especially with the example of the 2006 elections to the House of Deputies.

The influence of the electoral system on the party system is, in many particular cases, relatively clear. Experts have been trying to generalize and describe it since the 1950s. Probably the first attempt at a general summarizing of the causality between electoral rules and the party system are the well-known Duverger's laws (Duverger 1951)[2]. After Duverger came several other theoreticians. Douglas Rae (1967) empirically examined elections in twenty democratic countries between 1945 and 1965. On the whole, he confirmed the validity of Duverger's theses and tried to explain and generalize two empirical exceptions – Canada and Austria (Rae 1967: 94–95). William H. Riker was another theoretician who after empirical examination in the mid-1970s proclaimed Duverger's theses valid and explained the causes of another exception – India (Riker 1982). The last scholar to modify in a major way and significantly enrich the theory of causal relations in the electoral mechanism was Giovanni Sartori (1976, 1994). He formulated four theses generalizing the relation between the electoral system and the party system, which he called laws (Sartori 1994). With Sartori, two more variables entered the field: structured character versus non-structured character of the party system, and spatial concentration of the electorate versus voters' spatial dispersion. With this he managed to generalize, in a most satisfactory way, the relations between the electoral and party systems and explain many frequently quoted exceptions. In a sense this theory was followed up by that of Arend Lijphart (1985, 1994, 1999), in which the electoral system is one of the basic factors defining the model of democracy (majority versus consensual).

The most known Czech follower of Duverger's and Sartori's conclusions is Miroslav Novák (1997, 2004). He is a defender of the electoral system's and party system's strong relationship. We can find critical analysis of these theories in the work of another Czech specialist Petr Fiala (2004). New approaches to electoral systems'

research are represented by works of young generation of Czech political scientists. Roman Chytilek is one of leading specialists focusing on strategic effects of electoral systems (Chytilek 2004, 2005).

The attention of theoreticians, however, is not limited to mechanical relationships between electoral and party systems. It is evident that many voters accommodate their strategy in the selection of the party to electoral rules. Those who hand in their votes in a plurality electoral system, which brings long-term alteration of only two large parties and in which small parties are underrepresented or not represented at all, will make different decisions. The strategy will be different when in a strictly proportional system the voter can expect very proportional results. Various forms of electoral systems lead both parties and voters to different electoral strategies. Duverger (1951) was among the first to describe the psychological effect of the electoral system, which influences electoral behaviour in the relative majority system. Its effect arrives with the delay of several elections, an outcome of the 'mechanical effect' due to the character of the electoral system. The mechanical effect in itself is a direct result of the influence of the electoral mechanism on the party system. The psychological effect starts operating with the delay of approximately three regular elections. Voters begin to realize the existence of the mechanical effect, have some experience with it and so adjust their own strategy to it. Sartori (1976) moved professional discussion further forward when he presented the idea that electoral behaviour is influenced, besides the single-ballot plurality system, by other electoral systems as well, including the proportional one. The impact of the electoral mechanism on electoral behaviour was partly studied by several other foremost electoral specialists: Rae (1967), Taagepera and Shugart (1989) and Lijphart (1994). Many authors bring case studies of strategic voting in majority systems, for example in Great Britain, the USA and Canada, and, more recently, in mixed or mixed-personalized proportional systems (MMP), e.g., in Italy, New Zealand, Scotland and Germany. Garry Cox (1997), however, avoids the existing prevalence of attention on majority electoral techniques and sets his own research in strategic voting into the context of a whole scale of electoral systems, where he finds specific kinds of impact on the electoral decision-making of voters. Cox and Shugart (1996) introduced the closest work to the topic of this article. They focus on the strategic voting under proportional representation. Their observations put accent on the role of the number of parties and district magnitude relationship. Using Japanese and Colombian electoral data they researched the largest remainders electoral formulas. However, the Czech crucial factor – legal threshold is not in the scope of their analysis and moreover the Czech House of Deputies is elected by d'Hondt divisor but not by any largest remainder methods.

The importance of the electoral system, or its psychological effect, as relatively important variables of electoral decisions in the Czech Republic, was pointed out

by Miroslav Novák (1997). He believes that the five-percent legal threshold in the Czech proportional system could be a source of strategic voting and could influence the choice of the party by one part of the voters. The gradual experience with the mechanical effect of the legal threshold, i.e., the loss of votes given to the small parties which fail to cross the legal threshold, could make the voters choose the parties with a chance of crossing the 5 % legal threshold and thus entering the Parliament. This raises the issue of the importance of surveys of election preferences because for many voters they may become guidelines for decisions (Lebeda and Krejčí 2007).

Contemporary electoral system

The electoral system, which came into force in 2002, is a product of an effort at election reform, even though indirect. Its present-day form was never planned systematically; rather it is a compromise on which the parties had to agree after the verdict issued by the Constitutional Court in 2001. The present-day electoral system thus has an interesting origin.

Its beginnings can be found in the period after the elections of 1998, when the inability to make a majority coalition, homogenous in programme and ideology, made the two strongest parties sign a written agreement of a guaranteed single-party minority government. The leftist cabinet of the Czech Social Democratic Party (ČSSD) was tolerated during the whole election period and to some degree even supported by the opposition rightist Civic Democratic Party (ODS), according to the rules agreed upon in the 'Opposition Contract' (1998), and later supplemented by the 'Toleration Patent' (2000). In compensation, the ODS obtained the post of the chairman of the House of Deputies and several more controlling positions. In addition, the two parties guaranteed to make some adaptations in the constitutional system of the republic, one of them being an electoral reform. This resulted in the proportional system, which was to considerably strengthen the gains made by the stronger parties at the expense of the weaker, and thus ensure their majority, which enables establishing stable governments capable of action. The two main features of this system were 35 small electoral districts, in which the modified d'Hondt formula was applied. This was to result in a system preventing representation of small parties by means of high natural thresholds, from which the two large parties were to benefit. The Constitutional Court, however, at the beginning of 2001, abolished the key parts of the electoral reform. It decreed that they clashed with the principle of proportional representation, required by the Constitution for elections to the House of Deputies. The Czech Republic thus found itself in a situation when it had no electoral law, which would make the 2002 elections to the House of Deputies possible. What remained of the election law after the decision by the Constitutional Court could not be used separately. In this way the parliamentary parties were 'sentenced'

to seeking a compromise in the new election rules which would not clash with the decree issued by the Constitution al Court and, moreover, would be acceptable even for the changed situation in the Senate, where the ODS and ČSSD lost the majority. Finally, in the spring of 2002, the new electoral system was approved. Unlike the preceding system, all the basic variables are changed in it[3]. It was a compromise, which failed to meet the expectations of each party of an ideal system.

The first variable, with the smallest change, was the legal threshold. It remained unchanged, at 5 %. During the entire nineties, this variable was the fundamental factor influencing the representation of the parties. Its effect prevented very small parties from entering Parliament and was thus preserved. The values of the closing legal threshold for coalitions of parties, however, were changed. Originally, the electoral system required 7 %, 9 % and 11 % legal thresholds for two-member, three-member and more-than-three-member coalitions. In this way, parties were to be motivated for pre-election cooperation because a coalition composed of two parties only needed 7 %, instead of twice 5 % when the two parties were independent candidates. The new electoral law introduced a novelty, the additive quorum. Parties are not motivated by the size of the legal threshold for pre-election cooperation because the latter always increased by 5 % in direct proportion to the number of co-candidate coalition parties. That is 10 %, 15 % and 20 % for two-member, three-member and more-than- three-member coalitions.

The second change was replacing the original Hagenbach-Bischoff electoral formula, which held from 1990 to the elections of 1998, by the d'Hondt divisor. In the whole world, d'Hondt is most widespread electoral formula in the systems of proportional representation. It is often described as a method giving a slight advantage to strong parties. Its introduction in itself would not change the operation of the electoral system much if there were not significant changes in the other two variables.

The third reformed variable is the number of district tiers. The original electoral system used double tier districting, the first being held on the level of eight districts. The Hagenbach-Bischoff quota was practically never able to distribute all the seats belonging to districts. It left considerable remnants of unused votes. These undistributed seats and the leftover votes were then transferred from the primary district tier to the second national tier. There the remaining seats from the regional districts were allocated by all unused votes in a single national district. The second tier was to increase the proportionality of electoral results.

The new electoral system introduced a single tier districting. The abandonment of the second district tier was to some degree a given by the selection of the electoral formula. The d'Hondt divisor, unlike the original Hagenbach-Bischoff quota, distributes all seats directly on the level of the primary district tier (in our case, 14 districts). Thus there is nothing left to be passed to the second district tier. On the

other hand, D'Hondt does not rule out the existence of another type of the second district tier, which has the character of 'compensatory seats' (Sweden, Denmark, Belgium…). The omission of the second district tier is one of the two independent causes leading to the relatively disproportional results in 2006.

The existence of a single district tier together with d'Hondt, however, would not in itself bring major disproportional effects if simultaneously the fourth major change did not take place – an increase in the number of electoral districts. Instead of the original eight, now there were fourteen electoral districts, which of course were smaller. The boundaries of the new districts are identical with those of regional administration. Thus, it was a most logical and sensible change. The change in the number and therefore in the district magnitude, however, brought a change in the effects of the electoral system as a whole. The new electoral districts are of various magnitudes. While in the four largest districts (Prague, Central Bohemia, South Moravia and Moravian Silesia) in the two previous elections 23 to 25 deputies were elected, in the Liberec district there were only 8, and in the Karlovy Vary district 5. In the remaining eight districts 10 to 14 seats were distributed.[4] In the four largest districts the system brings fairly good results but in the two smallest it prevents the representation of minor parties. In medium-magnitude districts, however, something similar may take place.

And that happened exactly in the 2006 elections. The Green Party in most electoral constituencies was punished by the high natural threshold that is the percentage of votes needed to gain one seat. The natural threshold is the result of an interplay of three variables. Its high levels are due to the nonexistence of the second district tier and especially the magnitude of the fourteen new electoral districts. In most districts the natural threshold is now higher than the 5 % legal threshold. The high values of the natural threshold are also assisted slightly by the D'Hondt formula, which in itself gives a slight advantage to large parties and does not make representation easier for small parties.

The reformed electoral system introduced for the first time in 2002 can produce more disproportional results than its predecessor, last used in 1998. It increases the gains of large parties and leads to underrepresentation of small parties with regionally evenly distribution electorate. This is mainly due to the smaller electoral districts and the absence of double tier districting. The electoral formula has contributed somewhat to it as well.

The new system, however, produces disproportions only under certain circumstances. For instance, in the 2002 elections the parliamentary parties were represented fairly accurately. This was due to the fact that none of the four parliamentary parties was a small party. The smallest Coalition won more than 14 % of votes, thus easily surpassing the natural threshold in all districts except the smallest Karlovy Vary district (M = 5). On the other hand, in the 2006 elections two small parties

entered Parliament – the Christian Democratic Party – the Czechoslovak People's Party (KDU-ČSL) and the Green Party (SZ). While the KDU-ČSL was represented relatively accurately, SZ obtained about one half of the seats that it should get in proportion to its votes. The KDU-ČSL was assisted by strong regional support, received especially from some parts of Moravia, due to which in several districts it became a medium-size rather than a small party and easily crossed the natural threshold. On the other hand, the Green Party gained seats only in the five largest districts. This was due to the evenly distributed electoral support for the party and the fact that in many medium-magnitude and small districts they only closely did not reach the natural threshold.

Comparison of the results of each party and the degree of their representation in the last three elections to the House of Deputies is found in Table 1. It is worth noting that in 2006, for the first time, some parliamentary parties were underrepresented, the KDU-ČSL slightly and the SZ considerably. Previously, all parliamentary parties, both small and large, were overrepresented and gained a larger percentage of seats than they deserved from the percentage of the votes received. This was done at the expense of the non-parliamentary parties, which did not cross the 5 % legal threshold. Beside other things, this was due to the great loss of votes because of the legal threshold, from which all parliamentary parties benefited. We can conclude that while up to 2002 the representation of the parties was influenced especially by the 5 % legal threshold, in 2005 there was the additional, significant effect of the natural threshold.[5]

Table 1: Results of Elections to the House of Deputies in 2006 as Compared with Elections in 1998 and 2002

	Percentage of votes			Percentage of seats			Index of representation[6]		
	1998	2002	2006	1998	2002	2006	1998	2002	2006
ODS	27.74	24.47	35.38	31.5	29	40.5	1.14	1.19	1.14
ČSSD	32.31	30.20	32.32	37	35	37	1.15	1.16	1.14
KSČM	11.03	18.51	12.81	12	20.5	13	1.09	1.11	1.01
Koalice	–	14.27	–	–	15.5	–	–	1.09	–
KDU-ČSL	9	–	7.22	10	–	6.5	1.11	–	0.9
SZ	1.12	2.36	6.29	0	0	3	0	0	0.48
US	8.6	–	0.3	9.5	–	0	1.1	–	0
The rest	10.2	10.19	5.68	00	0	0	0	0	0
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100	–	–	–

Source: Election server of the Czech Statistical Office: http://www.volby.cz/.

The effect of the present-day electoral system for the strategy of voting can be illustrated by two factors, the two main causes of the disproportion in the electoral system. Thus we will now discuss the effect of the legal threshold and the natural

threshold on the decisions of the voters. We are interested in finding out whether the voters are conscious of the consequences of these factors and whether they adjust their votes to it. We shall try to verify the existence of this psychological effect of the electoral system.

Together with the four described primary variables, a most important secondary variable was adapted the manner of personalized preferential voting[7]. With its help voters can influence the order of the candidates on the party list and thus the personal representation of political parties. In 2002 the number of preferential votes available for the voter was cut from four to two. At the same time, however, the threshold of preferential votes, after crossing of which the candidates could move up on the list to the first place, was lowered from 10 % to 7 %. The manner of preferential votes has been the most frequently changed part of the Czech electoral law. It has been reformed six times till now and the last amendment was adopted in 2007. Although this is a secondary variable, which has no effect on the distribution of seats among the parties and only influences the distribution of seats among candidates within the party, we shall analyze its impact. Also we want to find out how the voters decide on the basis of the existing rules.

Legal threshold and the voters' decisions

The 5 % legal threshold for the entry of political parties to the House of Deputies was already introduced in the Czech Republic in the first 'after-November' elections in 1990 (elections to the Federal Assembly and the Czech National Council). Since then, six elections have been held, and the legal threshold of 5 % was never absent in them. Thus it can be assumed that voters have become accustomed to this element of the electoral system and respect it. The knowledge of the rule mechanically influencing party representation is a necessary prerequisite for the psychological influence of the elections that is influencing the voters' decisions. If the voters did not know of the 5 % legal threshold, it would be hard to assume that they calculate with this mechanical effect and take it into consideration in their voting. In the survey Czech Election Study 2006[8] the respondents were asked the following question: '*Not all political parties have a chance of succeeding in the elections and gaining seats in the House of Deputies. What percentage of votes should a party gain in order to get to the House of Deputies?*' The correct answer, i.e. '*5 %*', was known by more than half of the respondents (53.7 %), the rest did not know or their answer was incorrect. The most frequent wrong answer was '*10 %*', followed by '*6 %*' and '*3 %*'. The legal threshold was more often known by the voters who between 2002 and 2004 regularly took part in elections (0.375***) – participation was studied in elections to the House of Deputies in 2002, the European Parliament in 2004, and the regional assemblies in 2004. In all these elections there was the 5 % legal threshold. Familiarity with it rose

with the interest in politics (0.367***) and with the education of the respondents (0.278***).

Much more important for the assessment of the legal threshold's possible psychological effect is the degree of its knowledge among the voters. And that was obviously higher. The correct legal threshold was known by 66.2 % of the voters in 2006 (the elections for the House of Deputies). On the other hand, among nonvoters the knowledge was much lower, 30.4 %.

Some authors believe that the legal threshold valid for a long period could lead voters to a gradual departure from the small parties because they have no chance of succeeding (e.g., Novák 1997, Novák and Lebeda 2004). From gradually acquired experience the voters should realize that votes cast for a small party would most probably be lost. Thus it appears that a significant part of knowledgeable voters will vote strategically. Their votes would be shifted in favour of the parties that can be sure of being elected or having at least a chance for that. For some citizens it can even be a reason for not going to the elections. Rather than losing the small party vote or giving it instead to a large party, of which they have a low opinion, they do not go to vote.

Measuring the psychological effect of the legal threshold in a survey is very difficult. It is hard to give a believable model of the situation in which the legal threshold does not exist and voters thus decide without its influence. Long-term experience with the legal threshold can mean that the this threshold could become so common for the voters that they no longer realize its existence and so cannot be influenced by it. Still, there was nothing left for us but to choose a direct question. It is not an ideal way, but under the circumstances the only possible one. The voters were asked the following question: '*If in this country there were no restriction of the percentage of votes needed for entry into the House of Deputies, would you vote in this election in the same way or would you vote for a different party?*' Those who answered 'a different party' were next asked which one. 88.7 % of them said they would not vote for a different party. A mere 4.1 % said they would vote differently. The rest of the voters did not know. The greatest percentage of those who would vote differently (4.7 %), was found in the group of voters conscious of the 5 % legal threshold. A smaller percentage gave the wrong value (3.4 %) and the smallest percentage admitted they did not know of the legal threshold (2.8 %).

In a similar way the nonvoters were asked whether the nonexistence of the legal threshold would change their decision not to participate in the elections. Three quarters of them said they would not to go to the polls in that case either. Only 6.2 % of them allegedly would under such circumstance go to vote. Their share was nearly double (11.6 %) among those nonvoters who gave the correct value of the legal threshold. Similar data on the declared voting if there was no threshold are found in Table 2.

Table 2: Attitude of voters and nonvoters if there were no legal threshold

		Knowledge of the value of the legal threshold (in %)			All
		correct	wrong	do not know	
Voters	– would vote the same party	90.2	89.3	83.3	88.7
	– would vote a different party	4.7	3.4	2.8	4.1
	– do not know	5.2	7.4	13.9	7.2
Total		100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Non-voters	– would vote	11.6	7.4	3.3	6.2
	– would not vote anyway	72.1	80.9	76.4	75.7
	– do not know	16.3	11.8	20.3	18.2
Total		100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

Source: *Czech Election Study 2006.*

The proclaimed changes in electoral behaviour and turnout if there was no legal threshold are not very large. They rather imply a weaker influence of the legal threshold on the decision-making. On the other hand, if there were no 5 % legal threshold, the pre-election campaign would be completely different. Small political parties would most probably get more space in the media, their leaders would appear more often on prime television debates and their programmes would be more often analyzed in the media. Small parties with some hope for success would probably gain more sponsors and could thus make their campaign more intensive. As it was said above, such a situation cannot be modelled. The attitudes found among the respondents thus probably do not reflect real shifts in electoral behaviour, which could take place under such circumstances. Rather they are to be seen as the smallest possible shifts we can imagine under the changed situation. How would the election results be changed by them? We can only make an attempt at modelling the situation.

All voters who said they would vote for a different party were asked which one. Likewise all nonvoters who said they would go to vote if there were no legal threshold were asked whom would they vote for in that case. These answers were added to the answers of those who did vote and would not change their decision. The model thus obtained suggests how the election result could change. Its validity is understandably limited by the fact that it is only a proclaimed attitude, under very hypothetical circumstances. In such a case the party that would lose most would be the ODS (1.5 %), followed by the ČSSD and KDU-ČSL. The Green Party, as expected, would benefit, and so would the SNK-ED and other small parties. A detailed comparison with the results of the 2006 elections is found in Table 3. There would be some shifts in support but not very dramatic. These changes would be caused by approximately the same degree of participation of nonvoters and a change in the preference among the voters. Election participation would rise by about 2 %, from 64.5 % to 66.5 %.

Table 3: Change in the Electoral Result due to the Proclaimed Change in Electoral Behaviour with Nonexistence of the Closing legal Threshold (in % of votes)

	2006 election result	Result without the threshold	Difference
ODS	35.4	33.9	−1.5
ČSSD	32.3	31.3	−1
KSČM	12.8	12.8	0
KDU-ČSL	7.2	6.9	−0.3
SZ	6.3	6.8	+0.5
SNK-ED	2.1	2.7	+0.6
The rest	3.9	5.6	+1.7
Total	100	100	+ − 2.8

Sources: Electoral server of the Czech Statistical Office: http://www.volby.cz/. Czech Elections Study 2006.

The relatively small percentage of those who with the nonexistence of the legal threshold would change their views could easily be interpreted so that the psychological effect of the legal threshold exists but without a major impact on the voters. The problem is whether this interpretation is correct. We mentioned the relatively serious limitations of the approach taken in the examination of this phenomenon in the questionnaire survey. The development of the electoral results in the 'post-November' era of free elections on the other hand suggests that in the past the legal threshold did have an influence. Table 4 contains important indexes, which can tell a good deal about the effect of the legal threshold on the voters' decisions. The data include elections to the Czech National Council and the House of Deputies from 1990 until 2006.

Table 4: Development of Principal Indexes Pointing Out the Psychological Impact of the Legal Threshold between 1990 and 2006

	Election year					
	1990	1992	1996	1998	2002	2006
Total number of contesting parties	13	19	16	13	28	26
Parliamentary parties (5 % votes or more)	4 (31%)	8 (42%)	6 (38%)	5 (38%)	4 (15%)	5 (20%)
Unsuccessful parties 4 %–5 % votes	3 (23%)	1 (5%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
Unsuccessful parties 3 %–4 % votes	0 (0%)	2 (11%)	1 (6%)	2 (15%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
Unsuccessful parties 2 %–3 % votes	1 (8%)	1 (5%)	2 (13%)	0 (0%)	2 (7%)	1 (4%)
Unsuccessful parties 1 %–2 % votes	1 (8%)	3 (16%)	1 (6%)	2 (15%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
Unsuccessful parties 0 %–1 % votes	4 (31%)	4 (21%)	6 (38%)	4 (31%)	21 (78%)	19 (76%)
Total percentage of lost votes	18.81	19.11	11.16	11.32	12.53	5.97
Mean percentage of votes per one unsuccessful party	2.09	1.74	1.12	1.42	0.52	0.28

Source: Election server of the Czech Statistical Office: http://www.volby.cz/.

Note: Elections to the Czech National Council 1990 and 1992 and to the House of Deputies of the Parliament 1996–2006.

According to the general formula devised by Duverger, the first elections after the introduction of the electoral system would be without any psychological effect on the voters. The 1990 elections were exactly like this. The mechanical effect functioned perfectly. 18.8 % of votes were lost because their parties failed to cross the legal threshold. Only four from the thirteen competing parties entered the Czech National Council. Two years later the voters could already get a general idea of the legal threshold but they still underrated its effect. Three parties needed less than one percent to cross the legal threshold. A record number of votes was lost –19.1 % votes. Only the third elections cut the loss to 11.2 %. This fairly well corresponds both with the general theories (e.g., Duverger), and with practical thoughts concerning the Czech electoral system (Novák 1997), according to which it takes three elections in succession before the voters get used to the system, understand its consequences, and adapt their electoral strategy to it. The percentage of lost votes is a good evidence of that. It appears even clearer when we relate it to the number of parties that could not enter the House of Deputies. We obtain the mean percentage of votes per one unsuccessful party. This figure decreased through the years 1900 to 2006, with the exception of the 1998 elections. The increase was due to the loss of votes in two political parties, about which opinion surveys as well as the voters wrongly assumed would reach the House of Deputies. These parties were SPR-RSČ and DŽJ. Table 4 presents details for the whole period under study. Worth noting is the drop in percentage of lost votes in the last elections, to less than one third as against the first half of the nineties. The mean percentage of lost votes per one unsuccessful party even dropped to less than one seventh of the original figure. This means that the declining trend continued in spite of the rise in the number of competing parties.

The election statistics make us conclude that during the period under study the psychological effect of the legal threshold most probably played a major role in the development of voters' behaviour[9]. The question, however is, what its role is today. The weakening trend toward the election of smaller non-parliamentary parties can have a different cause too. The latest election contest was clearly a duel. The two large parties tried to present the elections as a contest of two alternatives. Such a strategy naturally weakens the smaller parties. The psychological effect of the system was probably increased due to several other factors. And yet a new party entered the House of Deputies – the Green Party thus becoming the first non-parliamentary party in the history of the Czech Republic that succeeded in crossing the legal threshold and win seats in the Chamber.

In addition to the 5 % legal threshold for each party, there is the 'additive' threshold for coalitions. A two-member coalition must gain at least 10 %, a three-member coalition 15 % and a coalition comprised of four or more parties needs 20 %. From the technical point of view it can be said that this novelty introduced in 2002 did not affect the outcome of either subsequent election. There was no coalition, which

under the new conditions would lose the seats, while under the old conditions it gained them. Its impact was, however, upon the strategy of political parties in both elections. One of the principal causes of the transformation of the Four-member coalition (in Czech *Čtyřkoalice*) into a two-member Coalition (in Czech *Koalice*) before the 2002 election was the fear of the high legal threshold. The merging of two member parties, in Czech called the US and DEU, and the exclusion of the ODA was a strategic measure against the threat of the legal threshold. The election result then showed that the third or even fourth coalition subject would have eliminated the original four-member coalition from the struggle for seats because the coalition only won 14.3 % of the votes and with this result would consist of three parties, it would not have won a single seat and all its votes would have been lost. Even before the 2006 elections the additive threshold influenced the voting strategy of political parties. Two minor parties – the Association of Independents (SNK) and European Democrats (ED), which jointly as a coalition gained seats in the 2004 election to the European Parliament, formally united into a single party in order to avoid the 10 % legal threshold. But even thus they did not reach the House of Deputies.

If this additive threshold influences the party strategy, does it affect the voters' decisions too? In 2006 something like this could hardly be assumed. But the 2002 election could lead to such thoughts. The transformation of the rightist-central four-member coalition into a new coalition with only two members (KDU-ČSL and US-DEU) would have some problems. Especially the exclusion of the ODA could, for some voters, seriously damage the image of the opposition grouping representing a 'new and better style' of politics[10]. The pragmatic step caused by the institutional conditions could in the long run discourage part of the potential voters. Absence of proper data, however, prevents us from checking this hypothesis.

Natural threshold

The 2006 election was, from the aspect of representation of parliamentary parties, a turning point. For the first time in history, minor parliamentary parties were under-represented, Christian Democrats slightly but the Green Party considerably (see Table 1). This was due to the very high natural threshold in each district due to their smaller magnitude and the single tier districting. The fact that a minor party crosses the legal threshold does not mean yet that it will win a seat in each of the fourteen districts. This can only be sure in Prague, Central Bohemia, Southern Moravia and Moravian Silesia, because in these districts a large number of seats (23–25) are distributed and the boundary of the natural threshold ranges from 3 % to 4 % of the votes. In the majority for the remaining districts, however, only one half of the seats (10–14) was distributed and the natural threshold most often rose to 5.5 % to 9 %. This phenomenon became extreme in the two smallest districts – Liberec and

Karlovy Vary, where for the gain of a seat it was necessary to cross the 8 % to 11 % and 11 % to 16 % thresholds, respectively. The thresholds greatly differed in each district according to the district magnitude. In general it is very hard to determine the concrete value of the natural threshold under a particular situation. In other words, it is difficult to say exactly how many votes are required to win in a particular district, e.g., for the Green Party, in order to cross the threshold and gain a seat. It can be said, however, exactly, in what interval this value is found. There are boundary values of the lower and upper thresholds between which the real value is always found. Between them is situated the value of the 'effective' threshold, which gives the mean value, to which the real thresholds should most often approach. The values for each district are presented in Table 5.

Table 5: Values of Natural Thresholds in each Electoral District in 2006 Elections

District:	District magnitude M	Percentage of lost votes	Unadjusted thresholds (%)			Adjusted thresholds (%)		
			lower T_i	upper T_e	effective T'	lower T_i	upper T_e	effective T'
Prague	25	6.43	3.45	3.85	3.65	3.23	3.60	3.41
Central Bohemia	23	6.30	3.70	4.17	3.94	3.47	3.90	3.69
South Bohemia	13	5.36	5.88	7.14	6.51	5.57	6.76	6.16
Plzeň	11	6.24	6.67	8.33	7.50	6.25	7.81	7.03
Karlovy Vary	5	6.41	11.11	16.67	13.89	10.40	15.60	13.00
Ústí	14	5.42	5.56	6.67	6.11	5.25	6.31	5.78
Liberec	8	6.53	8.33	11.11	9.72	7.79	10.39	9.09
Hradec Králové	11	7.25	6.67	8.33	7.50	6.18	7.73	6.96
Pardubice	10	6.36	7.14	9.09	8.12	6.69	8.51	7.60
Vysočina	10	5.24	7.14	9.09	8.12	6.77	8.61	7.69
South Moravia	23	5.27	3.70	4.17	3.94	3.51	3.95	3.73
Olomouc	12	5.79	6.25	7.69	6.97	5.89	7.25	6.57
Zlín	12	5.69	6.25	7.69	6.97	5.89	7.25	6.57
Moravian Silesia	23	5.85	3.70	4.17	3.94	3.49	3.92	3.71

Source: The calculation proper is based on the data from the election server of the Czech Statistical Office: http://www.volby.cz.

Notes: The value of the upper threshold for the D'Hondt divisor is calculated by means of the formula: $T_i = 100 \% / (M + 1)$, where M represents the district magnitude. The value of the lower threshold for the d'Hondt is calculated by means of the formula: $T_i = 100 \% / (M + p – 1)$, where M represents the district magnitude and p the number of parties competing for the seats. In our case, 5 parties passed to the scrutinium. For greater detail about the calculations see (Gallagher 1992).
Unadjusted thresholds ignore the votes lost because of the legal threshold, while the unadjusted votes are included.

Table 5 shows that small districts brought the highest values of natural thresholds and conversely, large districts gave small parties the greatest hope for representation.

The lower, upper and effective thresholds are presented in the table in two forms. Unadjusted thresholds are the results of the calculations based on the magnitude of electoral districts valid for five parties (ODS, ČSSD, KSČM[11], KDU-ČSL and SZ). In reality, however, the percentage of the five parties together does not equal 100 %. In each district there were a certain percentage of votes for the parties that failed to cross the national 5% threshold and did not get into the scrutinium. To make the threshold values established by us correspond to real party gains, the unadjusted values should be transformed to the base of 100 %. Adjusted values are found in the last three columns. These are then comparable with the parties' election gains.

An example of the party that suffered most by high natural thresholds was the Green Party. Although it crossed the national legal threshold it did not gain a seat in nine out of the fourteen districts. Thus it won one half of the seats to which it would have been entitled in the case of a relatively proportional result. The high values of natural thresholds are a new phenomenon for voters and they obviously failed to take it into account. In the preceding elections, in 2002, this appeared only in the smallest district, Karlovy Vary, where the candidate of the Coalition failed to reach the House of Deputies. At that time nobody paid any attention to it. Four years later this phenomenon became quite common and detrimental for the majority of the Green Party regional leaders. The new election system thus revealed its new mechanical effect. It will be interesting to observe whether in the subsequent elections the voters will respond to it in some way or not.

Preferential voting

The last technical aspect to affect the election reform from 2000 to 2002 is a type of personalizing of the election. The principal features remained unchanged. The parties competed through lists of candidates and had the decisive influence on the selection of the persons and their sequence in the list. The voter could try to change the sequence determined by the party by allocation of preferential votes. There are two key parameters: in what way the voter can attempt it and what will happen to his preferences during the counting of the votes.

The earlier electoral system enabled the voters to use as many as four preferential votes. For a candidate to move higher from the non-eligible place he had to gain at least 10 % preferential votes from the total number of votes cast for the party. After crossing this threshold the candidate was moved to the first place on the list. When there were more successful candidates, they were arranged at the top of the list according to the number of votes received. The seats received by the party were then allocated to the candidates according to the changed sequence. In practice, this system did not work. The chance of a candidate to be elected through the preferential

votes was minimal. In 1996, through the preferences, only one candidate, and in the 1998 elections two candidates were elected.

The new adaptation is based on the same principle but the two main criteria are reformed. In the 'Opposition Contract' reform, the number of preferential votes was decreased from four to two. This change was preserved in the new compromise accepted in the early 2002. The percentage of preferential votes allowing the candidate to jump to the top of the list was finally cut to 7 %. This gave an impression of much raised chances for the candidates from the non-eligible places. We should bear in mind, however, that by cutting the threshold from 10 % to 7 %, at the same time the number of preferential votes was decreased to one half (from 4 to 2 votes)[12].

Unlike the elections in the 1990s, in 2002 the preferential votes were much resorted to. This was due to the preferences on the list of the Coalition candidates, where especially the supporters of the KDU-ČSL by means of preferential votes tried to increase the representation of Christian Democrats at the expense of the US-DEU candidates. The massive attack by the KDU-ČSL left only 8 from the total of 31 coalition seats for the Union of Freedom (US). If the earlier 10 % threshold had been kept, the number of elected Unionists would have risen by three, at the expense of the Christian Democrats.

In 2006 the preferential votes no longer played such an important role. And yet on their basis, more deputies entered the Chamber than in the 1990s. If we concentrate only on the candidates of parliamentary parties, then from the total of 1709, 55 candidates only crossed the 7 % threshold. For 16 of them, however, it meant an upward shift on the list. The rest were either the leaders on the list and thus could not be moved up or the candidates before them were even more successful and so could not be overtaken. In the end, only six candidates moved up from the non-eligible to the eligible position and due to preferential votes gained a seat. They were Alena Páralová from the ODS, Pavel Ploc from the ČSSD, and, surprisingly, four Communists: Václav Exner, Zuzka Bebarová-Rujbrová, Vladimír Koníček and Milada Halíková, who, however, figured on the KSČM list as a non-party candidate.

In comparison with the 1990s, in the last two elections (2002 and 2006) more candidates were elected by means of preferential votes – this begins slowly and gradually gains in importance.[13] Our attention therefore should turn in this direction. A more detailed analysis of preferential votes handed in for candidates of Parliamentary parties in the 2006 elections gives a more accurate idea of which voters give which candidates preferential votes and what their decisions influence.

In the 2006 elections, 1,808,869 preferential votes were handed in[14]. This figure, however, does not reveal how many voters resorted to preferential voting. It is only certain that they were not less than one half, that is 904,435, and at the same time they could not be more numerous than the total number of preferential votes. Every voter can only use one or two preferential votes and this difference cannot be estab-

lished from the election statistics. Here the results from the questionnaire survey must help, that is from *The Czech Election Study 2006.* It shows that the opportunity of giving a preferential vote was used by 22.1 % voters. This was about 1,183,000 in this election. If this figure is related to the total number of preferential votes handed in, the conclusion is that 77.9 % voters did not make use of any preferential vote, 6.8 % gave one, and 15.3 % voters gave two preferential votes. Here it is of interest that 7.9 % voters gave one or one of two preferential votes to the leader on the list of candidates. This is more than one third of those who made use of preferential voting. The leaders on the list represent only 4 % of all candidates. Thus it can be expected that part of voters using preferential votes understands quite well that by this the candidate can be moved up from the lower positions and that it is also a very efficient tool for helping the candidates in the existing front position to keep it. Other part of these voters can simply express approval and favour with the known leader by preferential votes.

Table 6: Mean Percentage of Priority Votes for Candidates according to Party, Education and Sex in the 2006 Election

Candidates ac. to party:	all candidates		elected candidates	
	mean percentage of preferential votes	multiple of the mean of all candidates	mean percentage of preferential votes	multiple of the mean of all candidates
KDU-ČSL	2.08	1.31	13.23	3.00
SZ	1.61	1.02	8.50	1.93
KSČM	1.53	0.96	6.18	1.40
ODS	1.37	0.87	3.11	0.71
ČSSD	1.33	0.84	3.32	0.75
Education of candidates:				
Lower and middle	1.21	0.76	2.93	0.66
University	1.76	1.11	4.82	1.09
Sex of candidates:				
Men	1.58	1.00	4.28	0.97
Women	1.60	1.01	5.09	1.15
All candidates	1.58	1	4.41	1

Source of the data: *Election server of the Czech Statistical Office: http://www.volby.cz/.*

Note: *N = 1709 (candidates), N = 200 (elected deputies).*

The most active voters in the allocation of preferential votes in the 2006 elections were those of the KDU-ČSL. One Christian Democratic candidate on average received 2.08 % of preferential votes, which represents one third more than what on average the other candidates of all Parliamentary parties received (see Table 6). The Christian Democratic voters thus confirmed their activity in the allocation of

preferential votes, known already from 2002. In that year, however, their votes were aimed at moving their own candidates before the US candidates, on the joint list of the then Coalition. In 2006, when the KDU-ČSL had an independent party list, its preferential votes had a different sense – especially to strengthen the position of leaders and candidates in eligible places. This is demonstrated by the exceptionally high share of preferential votes handed in for those candidates who in the end were really elected. The mean of votes for elected candidates of all parliamentary parties (4.41 %) was exceeded by Christian Democratic deputies by three times (13.23 %, see Table 6).

The voters of the Green Party and the Communists were in the number of allocated preferential votes on the average (SZ 1.61 %, KSČM 1.53 % of preferential votes per one candidate). In their case, too, the preferential votes went more often in favour of the subsequently elected deputies, although this fact was not as clear as in the case of the KDU-ČSL. The Greens exceeded the total mean of votes for average candidates approximately twice, and Communists by about two fifths. In allocation of preferential votes, the least active were the voters of the largest parties, the ODS and ČSSD – the mean number of preferential votes per one candidate was 1.37 % and 1.33 %, respectively. At the same time, voters supporting the two largest parties gave their preferences more often to the candidates who finally were not elected. In other words, in the two largest parties the least support went to candidates in the eligible places, and conversely, their voters most often, though generally unsuccessfully, tried to help the candidates in non-eligible places. The total summary and detailed information is found in Table 6.

Table 7: Factors Connected with the Percentage of Preferential Votes for each Candidate, according to their Partiesw

	Candidate's number on the list	Candidate's university education	Candidate's age	Candidate's sex[a]	N
ODS	−0.545***	0.054	−0.021	−0.015	342
ČSSD	−0.490***	0.145**	−0.012	−0.041	341
KSČM	−0.596***	0.182***	0.016	0.089	343
KDU-ČSL	−0.580***	0.095	0.116*	0.011	343
SZ	−0.580***	0.062	0.002	−0.023	340
All	−0.543***	0.110***	0.020	0.003	1709

Source of the data: *Election server of the Czech Statistical Bureau: http://www.volby.cz/. The author's own calculations.*

Note: *Correlation measured by Pearson's correlation coefficient.*

Explanations: *Statistical significance marked: *** 0.001, ** 0.01, * 0.05.*
[a] Males were coded 0 and females 1.

From the data in the election statistics it is possible to observe the relations between the share of preferential votes for each candidate and the few variables that appear in the electoral statistics. About each candidate it is known what his place was on the list, whether he has a university degree, what sex and age he or she is. In general it holds that success in obtaining preferential votes is in strong correlation with the place on the list. The higher the place, the more preferential votes they are likely to get. This correlation is strongest among the candidates of the KSČM and then of the KDU-ČSL and the SZ. Below average, though still strong, is this correlation in the ČSSD. The particular values of correlation coefficients are found in the first column in Table 7. From personality features that can be deduced from the election database, only university education is correlated to the number of preferential votes, and that happens only in the KSČM and the ČSSD. In the remaining five parliamentary parties this is not so, probably because there are more university graduates in them and occur even among those who fail to get preferential votes. The candidate's age plays a tiny role only in the candidates of the KDU-ČSL, where success in getting preferential votes is on a slight increase with age. Candidate's sex has no influence, in any party. Detailed data are brought in Table 7.

Election statistics do not and cannot provide a sufficient idea of individual characteristics of the candidates, which could be significant in the voter's decisions. That is why we had to take a less accurate but the only possible way of finding the importance of the factors playing some role in the allocation of preferential votes by the voters. In the post-election survey, the *Czech Election Study 2006*, the voters saying they had allocated a preferential vote were presented with various types of characteristics of candidates and asked whether they were important for their decision in giving a preferential vote. Most often the voters rated the importance of the candidate known in the public (61.7 %). For more than one half of the voters, even education was important (55 %) and occupation (53 %) of the candidate. For 43.4 % personal knowledge of the candidate was important and for 39.6 % the place of residence. Only 20 % voters thought age important and only 12.5 % thought sex important when deciding about the preferential vote. This is, however, a subjectively proclaimed importance and in reality it need not completely agree with the motives guiding the person in favour of a particular candidate.

Table 8: Correlation between the Characteristics of the Voters (Income and Education) and the Proclaimed Importance of the Characteristics of the Candidates Preferred by Them

	proclaimed importance of candidate's occupation	proclaimed importance of candidate's education	N
Voter's income	0.129*	0.097	279
Voter's education	0.107*	0.147**	345

Source: *Czech Election Study 2006.*
Note: *Connection measured by means of the Pearson correlation coefficient.*
Explanations: *Statistical significance marked: ** 0.01, * 0.05.*

There are few weaker correlations between the characteristics of the candidates, which the voters said were important in their decision-making, and the characteristics of the voters themselves. No statistically significant correlations were found with, e.g., age, sex, religious views, and other socio-demographic features of the voters. The only exceptions, which moreover are correlated only to some features of the candidates, were the income of the voters, their education and sex. Higher income of the voters slightly tended toward the expression of the importance of the candidate's occupation. Higher education of the voters revealed this very slight correlation too, while correlation with the importance of the candidate's education was slightly higher (see Table 8).

Although the voters claimed that the candidate's sex was of little importance in their decisions, in the end it turned out that there was a slight relationship between the voter's sex and the candidate's sex. In this case, however, I do not start from the subjectively proclaimed importance but from the much more objective index, the candidate's sex, preferred by the voter. On principle, each had five choices 1) to prefer two males, 2) one male, 3) a male and a female, 4) a female, 5) two females. Table 9 shows the differences in preferences between male voters and female voters. Male voters more often preferred two male candidates and there has been detected strong statistical relationship. In all other cases, however, females slightly prevailed, even when a single male candidate was preferred. But there has not been any statistical significance uncovered. The table also reveals the majority of more than three quarters of the votes are for male candidates. This, however, is largely due to their numeral preponderance on the list of candidates. Worth noting is also the fact that no respondent in the survey, neither a male nor a female, said that he would give both his preferential votes to female candidates. Even considering the selection error, this is really a rare phenomenon. On the other hand, female deputies get more than the average share of preferential votes as compared to their male colleagues. In the 2006 election, successful female candidates to the House of Deputies, on average, gained 5.1 % preferential votes, whereas males only 4.3 %. This is obvious from the two columns in Table 6.

Table 9: Influence of the Voter's Sex on Preferential Votes for Candidates, according to their Sex (column percentage).

Sex and number of preferred candidates:	Voter's sex:		All voters
	male	female	
male and male	16.67*	6.49*	12.06
male	61.83	66.88	64.12
male and female	10.75	12.34	11.47
female	10.75	14.29	12.35
female and female	0.00	0.00	0.00
Total	100	100	100

Source: *Czech Election Study 2006.*

* Adjusted standardized residuals are 2.9/–2.9. It represents significance at 0.005 level. Remaining cells of the table are without statistical significance (adjusted standardized residuals are equal or below 1).

Czech legislation of preferential voting brings some problems from the aspect of regional differences in the chance of being elected. Every voter in this country has the same number of preferential votes regardless of district magnitude. The threshold percentage of preferential votes entitling the candidate to move up on the list is the same in all districts (7 %), regardless of the different number of candidates on the lists. It is clear that a candidate in the district of Karlovy Vary, where on each list not more than 14 candidates could be present, will have a better chance of getting one of the two preferential votes than a candidate in Prague, where the voter also has two preferential votes but selects from as many as 36 candidates. The likelihood of a candidate gaining a preferential vote is thus higher in smaller electoral districts than in large ones. This is even proved by the statistically significant correlation between the mean percentage of preferential votes per one candidate and the number of candidates on the list. In 2006, the correlation of the two variables was 0.896 and in 2002 even 0.928 (Pearson's correlation coefficient, significance 0.001). This exceptionally strong correlation reveals the imperfection in the existing reform of the system of preferential voting.

Conclusion

The electoral system is certainly not a key factor shaping the electoral behaviour, though undoubtedly it is an important element, which can influence some voters in their decision- making. Its influence increases with the degree of how much the voters recognize its mechanical functioning and how much they realize its impact on the representation of the parties. A longer experience with the properties of the electoral system leads to more strategic decisions, which in the Czech Republic holds especially for the rule of the 5 % legal threshold. Voters now are much more sensitive

to the chances of smaller parties for crossing the legal threshold than formerly. On the other hand, high natural thresholds, which prevent candidates of small parties with a geographically evenly distributed electorate to gain seats in smaller and medium-magnitude districts so far do not stimulate voters for strategic voting. It can be assumed that in the future, a longer experience with this element of the electoral system will influence the decisions. The detailed knowledge with the mechanical effect of the natural threshold is likely to have a psychological effect. How strong it will be, will only be shown by further studies.

Czech voters, besides the legal threshold, have accepted preferential voting fairly well. Its importance is rising with each successive election. Preferential votes are optional, the voters can but need not use them. Voters of small parliamentary parties more often resort to them, most often the KDU-ČSL (Christian Democrats). The voters of the two strongest parties use the opportunity of interfering with the list of candidates least often. If they do so, then more often they give their votes to candidates in non-eligible places. Voters of small parties rather support the leaders and candidates with a high degree of certainty of being elected. The legislation of preferential voting is one of the elements of the electoral system that underwent changes most often. This trend seems to continue. Already it is fairly probable that the number of preferential votes available for each voter and the percentage of votes, which the candidate needs for a move up on the list, will be changed before the next elections.

Notes

[1]   The text is part of the research project GA ČR 403/07/1626.

[2]   Duverger's laws have three points:

1) Proportional representation encourages a system of parties that are multiple, rigid, independent and stable. (except in the case of waves of popular emotion).

2) The majority system with two ballots encourages a system of parties that are multiple, flexible, dependent, and relatively stable (in all cases).

3) The simple majority single-ballot system encourages a two-party system with alternation of power between major independent parties. (Duverger 1951)

[3]   For principal variables of proportional electoral systems see (Lebeda 2001).

[4]   The number of seats to be distributed in the districts is neither stable nor known beforehand. It is only calculated after the elections are over, on the basis of valid votes cast in each district. This means that two districts with the same number of population need not be represented by an equal number of deputies. This can happen when in one district electoral attendance was greater than in the other one. This, in the world rather infrequent approach to the distribution of seats among districts is, however, a tradition in the Czech Republic.

[5]   Unsuccessful electoral reform by the ODS and ČSSD is deeply analyzed in Lebeda (2000, 2004b). The contemporary electoral system for House of Deputies is described in details in Lebeda (2004a).

6   The index is calculated by means of the formula *s/v*, where *v* represents the percentage of votes cast for the party and *s* represents the percentage of seats for the party. A value of 1 indicates an ideal representation. A value smaller than 1 indicates underrepresentation, greater than 1 indicates overrepresentation.

7   Preferential votes have nominal character in the Czech Republic and there are no similarities to ordinal votes used in AV or STV. They are used only for personalization of voters' choice. 'Preferential vote' is the term adopted from the Czech electoral law.

8   *The Czech Election Study 2006* was an academic survey, held after the elections to the House of Deputies in 2006. It was prepared by a team from the Institute of Sociology of the Academy of Sciences, namely Tomáš Lebeda, Lukáš Linek, Pat Lyons and Klára Vlachová. The field collection of data was carried out by the Centre for the Public Opinion Poll, from the same institute, between June 9 and 21, 2006. The selection of respondents, aged over 18, was made by the quota method. There were 2002 respondents. The set was adapted by the use of weights which secure that the frequency of attendance at the elections and the party support agree with the real results. All further facts and conclusions are based on these data.

9   The psychological effect is reinforced by the electoral preferences polls. Voters follow the information about the chances of small parties to overcome the 5 % legal threshold. The media puts stress on the polls and they exaggerate every result approaching the 5 % legal threshold. More about electoral preferences polls and their publishing in media before 2006 elections is described in (Lebeda Krejčí 2007).

10 The reason claimed for the exclusion of ODA from the four-member coalition was its uncleared financial situation.

11 Communist Party of Bohemia and Moravia.

12 Štěpán Pecháček describes older reforms of personalization by preferential votes (Pecháček 2003: 135–138).

13 Jakub Kyloušek brings out the general overview of 2006 preferential voting results (Kyloušek 2006: 115–119).

14 The value was established from the official election results (www.volby.cz).

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