

Comedies, horrors and tragedies

Different stories of primaries in political parties

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Primaries in CEE countries

- Very rare technique of candidate selection in the region
- Few parties with different approach:
 - UDMR, PSD (Romania)
 - KDU-CSL, VV (Czech Republic)
 - SDKU-DS (Slovakia)
- Often failures and limits when adopting and using primaries

PSD



- Romanian Social Democratic Party
- Major party in Romania
- Emerged after the split of communist successor party in the early 1990s
- Strong organizational heritage

PSD and primaries



- Adoption of primaries in 2004
- Reasons:
 - Membership rates
 - (In)stability of electoral support
 - Image of the party
 - Change of political generation

Membership rates



- Party portrays itself as a representative of the people
- 1992 – 1996 – huge increase of members from 60 to more than 300 thousand members
- Later stagnation considered as unpleasant
- Primaries as a message for people to attract them to join the party

Electoral results



- Legislative elections:
 - 1992 – 28 %
 - 1996 – 21.5 %
 - 2000 – 36.6 %
- High volatility of results
- Need for a stronger link between the party and its voters

Image of the party



- Party widely accused of clientelistic practices
- Strong local leaders and nepotism
- Alleged corrupt scandals in 1992 – 1996 while in government
- Need for an improved image and uncompromised candidates

New generation



- PSD as a party with strong long-term MPs
- Typically local and county leaders with powerful position in their constituencies
- Party`s official aim to bring new faces to politics and conduct a reform of the political class
- Primaries as a possible answer

Selection before primaries

- Nomination and selection on local and county level
- Executive committee:
 - Veto
 - Since 1999 even nomination of candidates after consulting the counties
- The whole process as a negotiation between the central level and counties

Adoption of primaries



- Not in statutes from the beginning
- Only for legislative elections, optional
- Conducted on the constituency level
- Electronic voting, multiple votes ($N = \text{district magnitude}$)

Candidates



- Only members
- Several conditions:
 - 1000 signatures
 - Honest persons
 - Professional recognition
 - Clean slate
 - Approval of county leadership
- Quotas – 25 % women, 30 % young members

Primaries 2004



- Held for both parliamentary chambers
- Chamber of Deputies - 722 aspirants for 314 seats
- Senate – 287 aspirants for 136 seats
- Turnout:
 - No precise figures available
 - Based on available data around 82 per cent (out of 385,481 eligible members)

Problems

- Unfair competition
- Electoral frauds
- Internal conflicts
- Inference of executive committee



Unfair competition



- Campaign rules:
 - 18 days, only meetings with members
 - Other means excluded
- Strong advantage of local and county leaders
- MPs not able to conduct campaign in their constituencies
- Even party meetings blocked from such activities
- Instant members recruited for material benefits

Electoral frauds



- Several problematic issues
- Local newspapers informed about winners prior to primaries
- Members of commissions were employees of candidates
- The same counted for observers (!)

Electoral frauds



- Electronic voting:
 - Many members saw computers for the first time
 - „Help“ of committee members, observers or even candidates
 - Secret vote thus often turned to public
- Multiple votes:
 - Voters could cast less than maximum amount of votes
 - If voters did so, the committee members filled the blank spots

Electoral frauds



- Magic with number of votes
- **Suceava county:**
 - Turnout – 15,710 votes
 - PSD secretary got 18,022 votes
- **Vrancea county:**
 - Turnout – 13,155 votes
 - PSD minister got 13,539 votes

Internal conflicts



- Losing local favorites blamed party for not respecting loyal and long-term members
- Many asked for compensations in form of offices
- Losing MPs accused the primary's framework, mainly the character of campaign
- Departures from the party

Inference from above



- Central committee changed 10 per cent of electable positions
- Typically the central leadership picked candidates for first positions
- Its inference started a further internal party clash

Primaries - effects



- No relevant influence on membership rates or party's image
- Higher stability of electoral support may be due to changes in the party system
- Strong internal conflict
- Primaries abandoned (officially adopted for all elections, but completely optional)
- Selection of PSD's candidates in fact returned before 1999

SDKU-DS



- Slovak Democratic and Christian Union – Democratic Party
- Emerged in 2000 after an internal conflict of SDK
- Party created from the above and already to a system with one nationwide constituency
- *'Party in the office'*

SDKU-DS and primaries

- Two main reasons for adoption of primaries
- Party wanted to present itself as the main successor of SDK's democratic legacy
- Separation from other parties by adopting a mechanism pointing to a more open way of decision making
- Closed doors vs. Primaries

Formal aspects

- Primaries for all elections (concentration on legislative elections)
- Closed primaries
- Half-mandatory (held if the leadership does not decide otherwise)

A change of the rules

- Original version:
 - All aspirants on one ballot
 - Party`s leadership (Presidium) ranks the aspirants
 - Members in primaries cast their votes
 - 150 aspirants with best results become candidates fully based on the amount of gained votes
 - Possible modifications by the Presidium
- Never applied in reality

A change of the rules

- Before election 2002 the rules were changed
- Candidates divided into two groups:
 - Candidates of the Central office (maximum of 15)
 - Candidates of the Regions
- Individual selection of the list leader adopted
- In fact a 3 in 1 model (three separate competitions)
- **Reserved positions for all categories**

Candidates

- Members and non-members
- Little quota for women and young
- Who nominates?
 - Leader – Presidium, regional leaderships, 300 members
 - Central candidates – Presidium
 - Regional candidates – regional leaderships, 100 members, associated organizations (women, young)

How it works

- Participants can vote in all three competitions
- 1 vote for aspirants for list leader
- 5 votes for central candidates
- 15 votes for regional candidates (candidates from all eight regions and women and youth organizations must receive at least one vote)

How it works

- Winner of competition for leader gets position 1
- Candidates for the central office get positions 2-6 and all even positions starting with eight (8, 10, 12,...26)
- Candidates for regions get all remaining seats:
 - Odd positions starting with seven (7, 9, 11,...25)
 - All positions from 27 below (27 – 150)
- Members in primaries have **no power** to change this rule

Centre

Candidates of Presidium	
1	
2	
3	
4	
5	
6	
7	
8	
9	
10	
11	
12	
13	
14	
15	

Regions

8 X

Region	
1	
...	
...	
...	
n	

2 X

Aff. organization	
1	
...	
...	
...	
n	

Position	Affiliation
1	Leader / Central office
2	Central office
3	Central office
4	Central office
5	Central office
6	Central office
7	Regions
8	Central office
9	Regions
10	Central office
...	
23	Regions
24	Central office
25	Regions
26	Central office
27	Regions
28	Regions

Positions	Central office (%)	Regions (%)
1-10	80	20
11-20	50	50
21-30	30	70
31-150	0	100

Position on list	Position (among regions)	Affiliation	
7	1	Region 1	All regions and aff. organizations MUST have exactly 1 candidate here
9	2	Region 2	
11	3	Region 3	
13	4	Region 4	
15	5	Region 5	
17	6	Region 6	
19	7	Region 7	
21	8	Region 8	
23	9	Aff. organization 1	
25	10	Aff. organization 2	
27	11	Region 4	The rest depends only on votes from primaries
28	12	Aff. organization 2	
29	13	Region 4	
...			
150	134	Region 2	

Primaries 2010

Contest	Eligible members	Turnout	Turnout (in %)
List leader	5,458	4,382	80.29
Candidates of the Centre	5,458	4,367	80.01
Candidates of the Regions	5,458	4,367	80.01

Primaries 2010

Contest	Candidates (Incumbents)	Nominations to be allocated	Realistic seats
Leader	2 (2)	2	2
Centre	14 (10)	14	14
Regions	150 (11)	134	14

Reality in regions

- Regional winners (10 persons) in 2010
 - 7 won from position 1
 - 1 won from position 2
 - 2 won from position 3
- The real power among „candidates of the regions“ is given to regional elites

Effects

- Party elites hold a strong control over primaries
- Candidates of the Central office (including aspirants for list leaders) are completely safe
- Members cannot push these candidates on lower positions
- The competition for the majority of upper seats is thus strongly limited

PSD and SDKU-DS



- Examples of few CEE parties using primaries
- Never fully opened primaries to members
- Leaderships kept strong position in the process
- PSD used primaries just once, SDKU-DS uses the technique repeatedly (2006 and 2012 not held due to early elections)
- In addition PSD faced several (or critical) features in organization, calculation of votes and following its own rules