

**A NEW GAME IN TOWN:
Party Primaries in Romania and Slovakia**

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Introduction

A large body of literature has emphasized the distinct features of the Central and Eastern European (CEE) political parties compared to those in Western Europe. Sharp differences could be observed in terms of party organization, voter loyalty, or elite discipline and loyalty (Lewis 1996; 2001; Bielasiak 1997; Kopecky 2001; Mair and van Biezen 2001; van Biezen 2003; Deegan-Krause 2006; Weldon 2006; Spirova 2007; Webb and White 2007). Similar differences can be easily observed with respect to intra-party democracy. The dominant control of the parliamentary party over leadership politics and the limited recruitment and involvement of party members appear to be the rules of the game. Consequently, it is not surprising that out of approximately 100 political parties with (constant or episodic) presence in Parliament only four parties formally specify primary elections – opened to their members – as means to select the candidates.

The use of primaries differs considerably across these parties and for two of them there is no variation in implementation. The Democratic Alliance of Hungarians in Romania (UDMR) has selected its candidates exclusively on the basis of primaries for all the legislative elections. The Christian and Democratic Union–Czechoslovak People's Party (KDU-CSL) included this formal provision in its statute towards the end of the 90s, but they were not implemented at national level and remained the choice of the regional branches of the party. In the other two cases, the primaries present longitudinal variations. The Romanian Social Democratic Party (PSD) used primaries for the selection of its legislative candidates in 2004. Following these elections, primaries have become optional and were no longer used. The Slovak Democratic and Christian Union – Democratic Party (SDKÚ-DS) has adopted primaries in 2000 but has used them in 2002 and in 2010. The approach of the PSD and the SDKÚ-DS towards primaries is similar: both have formally adopted primaries, but have failed to use them on a systematic basis. Is this a coincidence or is it the effect of common causes? In solving this puzzle, our paper compares the use of primaries in the two parties (the PSD in 2004 and the SDKÚ-DS in 2010¹) to identify similarities in the formal rules, organization, and potential effects of primaries on the parties.

The comparison between the two parties is more relevant if we account for the dimensions proposed by Gallagher and Marsh (1988). According to these, the parties

¹ The 2002 primaries were partly spoiled by the internal turmoil that relativized their results. At the same time, no data about those primaries is available.

have developed in different political environments and played contrasting roles on the political arena. The PSD is the largest political actor in a stable party system. For two decades – between 1992 and 2012 – the political space has been divided among the same four or five actors. No new parties gained seats in the legislature, being only exits without return. The high electoral threshold (Gherghina and Chiru 2013) and the shift from closed-list proportional representation (PR) to single-member districts in 2008 are valid explanations for the competitive environment in which the PSD was a key player (arguably the most important). With one exception, it has been constantly the major party either in the leading coalition or in the opposition; such an achievement is more notable in the context of relatively high electoral volatility at party system level. The SDKÚ-DS was part of a more unstable political system that witnessed the rise and fall of many political actors. Unlike Romania, Slovakia did not alter its electoral system and has always used open-list PR in spite of a few electoral reforms (e.g. a shift to national constituency). Such continuity could not be observed in the importance of the SDKÚ-DS for the political system: the party devolved from periods in which its leader was the country's prime-minister to a situation in which it barely gained access to Parliament.

The first section of our paper presents the contextual determinants and rationales behind the adoption of primaries. Next, we briefly describe the election process with an emphasis on formal rules, electoral campaign, competitiveness, and degree of participation. The third section analyzes the political consequences of primaries on the PSD and SDKÚ-DS. The empirical evidence reveals no impact of the inclusive candidate selection methods on the electoral performance or membership organizations for any party. The conclusions summarize our key findings and elaborate on the broader implications of our analysis and further avenues for research.

Contexts and rationales for adopting primary elections

The PSD is the largest Romanian party with an average electoral support higher than 30%. It won five out of the six legislative elections since its creation and participated in four coalition governments (three times as leading party). It emerged after a split in the National Salvation Front (FSN), the communist successor party, early in the transition (1992). The split followed a divergence of opinions within the leaders of the Front. Ion Iliescu's ideological group lost the internal elections and formed a new party – the Democratic National Salvation Front (FDSN). In 1993, it changed its name into Party or

Social Democracy in Romania (PDSR), and since 2001 in PSD. The PSD retained most of party elites and local branches of the Front and thus ended up with a relevant organizational heritage similar to that of the other successor parties in the region (Ishiyama 1999).

The PSD proactively used this heritage and worked to develop its organization being oriented towards the enlargements of its membership base. The result was a dramatic increase of membership between 1992 and 1996 from 60,000 to 309,000 members (Gherghina 2012). In general, the PSD maintained this high level until 2008, the average number of members being situated around 330,000 or approximately 1.6% of the electorate. In spite of this solid membership base, the inclusiveness for candidate selection was limited between 1992 and 2004. The selection was exclusively an elite affair that involved a negotiation between the central and local layers. The representatives of local organizations proposed candidates for the legislative elections and the executive committee approved these proposals. At the same time, since 1999 the central layer could make its own proposals after discussing with the local organizations. In 2004, the PSD decided to change this selection method and to introduce primaries open to all its members. The adoption of primaries was triggered by four major determinants: the stability or augmentation of membership, stronger ties with the electorate, a better image, and high quality candidates.

First, although the PSD had an important membership organization, one of the largest in Central and Eastern Europe, its claim to represent the masses could be best legitimized through a stable or even higher number of members. This was particularly important since other competitors also developed extensive membership organizations over time (Gherghina 2012). This concern was relevant also in the context of a small decrease in terms of membership between 1996 and 2000 when the party lost approximately 5,000 members. Second, the electoral support registered oscillations in the elections organized in the first post-communist decade. Its victory in the 1992 elections with almost 28% of the votes was followed by a decrease to 21.5% in the subsequent 1996 elections – its lowest electoral performance – that threw the party in the opposition. In 2000, the PSD's electoral support witnessed a boost (36.6%). This absence of electoral stability indicated the necessity of stronger connections with the voters and the adoption of primaries could have acted as a catalyst.

Third, among the Romanian political parties the PSD was considered widely indebted to its local notabilities and accused of clientelistic practices. In general, the local leaders and members of Parliament (MPs) play important roles in voter mobilization at constituency level in Romania. This is partly the reason for which the emergence of strong local leaders and MPs is encouraged by parties. However, in the case of the PSD more than in other parties, local leaders and MPs follow their own interests and agendas, playing the cards of nepotism and thus receiving extensive public criticism in the media. For example, corruption allegations following the 1992-1996 term in government and during the 1996 electoral campaign negatively affected the party contributed to its failure to win the elections. Thus, a better image of the party was necessary and the primaries could achieve this goal. The PSD wanted to illustrate that its internal decisions are governed by democratic principles. Along the same lines, the adoption of candidate-centered primaries converged with the movement for electoral reform at national level. Following the 2000 parliamentary elections, the closed-list PRsystem was seen as the key driver for popular discontent in Parliament, the quality of MPs, and the general performance of this institution (Gherghina and Jigla 2012). The aim was to replace the electoral lists controlled by the party with candidates running in single-member districts. While this reform was nationally implemented in 2008, the PSD – in government when the discussions on electoral reform emerged -conveyed a clear message to the masses. It was willing to adopt first the required electoral change in the internal procedures.

Fourth, the primaries aimed to improve the quality of candidates. Until 2000, the PSD appeared to rely extensively on approximately a quarter of its MPs that were renominated in consecutive elections. While being the Romanian party with the lowest renomination rates in the first decade (Gherghina 2012), the PSD is one of the CEE political parties with most MPs present in almost all legislatures during the post-communist period. These MPs are usually the leaders of county organizations or politicians with strong electoral support in the territory. The adoption of primaries could have ensured a higher percentage of reliable candidates on which the party can count for renomination. Furthermore, the primaries could provide the useful tools to “clean” the party and bring new faces in front of voters. The same idea was emphasized in a report issued by the PSD’s research institute “Ovidiu Sincai” in July 2004. According to this report, the primary elections could allow the reform of the political class. This

component was particularly important due to the strong competition faced by the PSD in the 2004 legislative elections. The second and third parties of the country joined their forces in an alliance to defeat the social democrats.

The PSD and the SDKÚ-DS had a similar formation and shared some reasons to adopt the primaries. The SDKÚ-DS is a classic case of a top down created party, emerged after the internal disputes within the Slovak Democratic Coalition (SDK). The latter was the main opposition group that contributed to the defeat of the semi-democratic regime of prime minister Mečiar in the 1998 elections. After these elections the parties involved in the SDK's formation advocated a return to its original coalition form.² The newly appointed Prime Minister Mikuláš Dzurinda rejected this idea and asked the original parties which created SDK to merge into a single subject.³ When mutual agreement proved impossible, Dzurinda together with several other SDK leaders released a declaration in January 2000 in which they announced the emergence of the SDKÚ-DS (Haughton and Rybář 2004: 124-127).

Within a few months, this newly emerged party introduced a mechanism for selecting its candidates through primaries; this made it the first and so far the only party in Slovakia to do so. There are two main reasons behind this decision which may be identified. First, the SDKÚ-DS tried to present itself as the main successor of the SDK's democratic legacy. This was evident from the way its name is abbreviated and also by the fact that the majority of the most prominent members of SDK joined the ranks of SDKÚ-DS, making a strong personal tie of both subjects. Later on, SDKÚ-DS presented as the main guarantee of entry of Slovakia into EU and NATO. This program point had a strong symbolic connotation as the country was disqualified from integration processes under Mečiar's rule (Haughton 2003). Finally the link with SDK was quite clear from the campaign before elections 2002. Main motto of SDKÚ-DS "*We'll finish what we've started*" was clearly referring to SDK as an unfinished job. The adoption of primaries, an instrument proclaiming the openness to ideas of freedom and inclusive decision making, could thus only support the party's legacy.

² SDK was originally founded as a coalition of five parties. Due to Mečiar's electoral reform which intentionally disadvantaged this type of cooperation, the SDK was finally forced to transform into a single party. (Rybář 2005: 136-137).

³ However, it is questionable if a solid subject could be created from all the parties which established SDK. These parties included Christian democrats, liberals, social democrats and greens - a mixture which was able to cooperate only because of a common enemy, the Mečiar regime.

Second, similar to the PSD, the SDKÚ-DS also acquired an instrument to distinguish it from the rest of competitors that selected their candidates behind closed doors. The idea of primaries in which all the members can take part strengthened the party's image as being committed to democratic values. At the same time the primaries set the party apart from the others and made membership in the SDKÚ-DS much more attractive. This was necessary in order to recruit a larger membership base, an important part of its vision of integration.⁴ In Slovakia the willingness of citizens to become members of parties remained rather low after 1989. The biggest membership from all was acquired by party of Mečiar in the 90s, reaching to 70,000 members (Kopeček 2007: 163) that dramatically exceeded the figures of any other party until present. Thus, the SDKÚ-DS adopted an instrument to start up its membership but this was situated in an environment working under rather different rules and the later development of the number of party members confirmed this (see below). However, from the standpoint of the SDKÚ-DS's elites, the introduction of primaries was seen as a pragmatic step towards backing up the party's public proclamations and general aims.

The primary election process

The importance of primaries differed considerably for the two investigated political parties. The primaries were mainly an experiment for the PSD and were treated as such. Illustrative in this respect is that the decision to adopt inclusive elections for candidate selection was officially announced on July 26 but not included in the party statute. Instead, it was mentioned in a special regulation elaborated by the executive committee. In 2005, one year after the primaries were effectively used for the legislative elections, the PSD introduced this provision in its statute. The text refers exclusively to primaries for the legislative elections (Chamber of Deputies and Senate) and includes a general reasoning to adopt them:

The Social Democratic Party stimulates internal competition to provide access to party structures, administrative posts or in Parliament to those members who proved a recognized professional training and an uncontested moral probity. To this end, it adopts primary elections to nominate party's candidates for deputies or senators (article 3, par. 6).

⁴ Although the previous discussions about merging the parties which established SDK ended without success, SDKÚ-DS continued to stress the need to integrate the various ideological currents. (Kopeček 2007: 382-383).

However, the primaries are no mandatory, as one may assume from the paragraph above, but optional. Article 39, par. 6 explains that the council of the county organizations “nominate candidates for the legislative elections based on the results of primary elections, whenever these are organized”. In spite of the adoption of primaries, the statute maintains the important role of the Executive Committee in having the last word. Consequently, the central office can modify the list of candidates resulted from the primary elections, after consulting the county organizations.

The statute adopted in 2006 weakens further the primaries by significantly modifying the text of article 3, par. 6. The most important sentence was altered into: “To this end, it adopts primary elections, which can be organized, to nominate party’s candidates for deputy, senator, member of the European Parliament, county and local councilor, and mayor”. In essence, it expands the applicability of primaries, but makes them completely optional. This decision, next to that of removing the right of the executive committee to nominate candidates, brings the party back to its pre-1999 candidate selection procedures.

Contrary to this gradual transition from mandatory to optional procedures, in the case of SDKÚ-DS the primaries were given an important role. Their basics are included into statutes followed by a detailed regulation in a specific document. The party adopted the primaries in a very extensive way as it connected them with all types of elections. According to the regulations for primary elections:

The nominations for the post of President of Slovakia, the members of Parliament, the chiefs of regions, mayors and deputies of towns are decided by the members of SDKÚ-DS based on a general, equal and direct vote with a secret ballot in the primaries (part 1, par. 1).

This statement fairly reveals the role of primaries in the party, although it misses any value laden content as shown above in case of PSD. As for the primaries to legislative elections this mechanism is mandatory unless the executive committee (the Presidium) decides otherwise. Primaries were not held twice and each time this was explained by time constraints due to early elections. The primaries are half-mandatory as a priori they have to be held if not decided in a different way.

Nomination procedures, eligibility criteria and electoral system

This variation in the general approach towards primaries was also reflected in their organization. Accordingly, the nomination procedures and electoral system are systematic and complex in the case of the SDKÚ-DS compared to the PSD. Further differences occur from the organization of primaries at constituency level, i.e. a national level constituency in Slovakia and 42 in Romania with variations in magnitude.

Consistent with the decision to organize its primaries at constituency (i.e. county) level, the PSD delegated the responsibility for candidate nominations to the county organizations. The procedure was similar for the candidates running for a seat on the list for the Chamber of Deputies (the lower Chamber) and for the Senate (the Upper Chamber). Each constituency compiled voting ballots including the names of all the candidates that fulfilled the eligibility criteria. The latter were a combination of fuzzy and concrete issues. Any member could become a candidate as long as (s)he gathered 1,000 signatures from supporters, was known as “honest person”, with professional recognition, had no prior convictions, was not under judicial investigation, and was never suspended or dismissed from leadership position. Also, none of the party members who held an official elected position at local and county level could run in primaries. As an extra criterion, the spoken foreign languages were an asset. Finally, in deciding who can run in primaries, two quotas were enforced: 25% women candidates and 30% young candidates (i.e. less than 35 years old). The candidates required a formal approval from the party leadership at county level.

The 2010 primaries for legislative elections in the SDKÚ-DS followed a different logic with complicated nomination procedures and inclusive eligibility criteria. In terms of nominations, they distinguish between two separate elections: 1) for the leader of the candidate list and 2) for the composition of the list of candidates. For the first type of elections, the party chairman is expected to run although he can choose not to. Candidates for this position can be nominated by the central office (Presidium), regional party leaders, or groups of at least 300 members. If no such nominations are made, the chairman becomes the candidate list leader by default. For the second type of elections, the candidates are formally divided into two groups: 15 candidates nominated by the central office and candidates nominated by the regions. The executive committee has monopoly on the nominations and order of candidates for the first group. The candidates for the regions are nominated by the remaining party bodies, two associated

party organizations (women and youth), or at least 100 members. The order of these candidates is determined by the regional leaderships (each region deciding the order of its candidates) and associated organizations. To be nominated, a person has to fulfill the requirements stated by the law to run for the office. The SDKÚ-DS also formally allows non-partisans to run in primaries, which is valid as for the candidates on the list and also for the leader.

The electoral system used by the two parties reflected the above mentioned differences in nominations. The PSD opted for an electronic voting that allows the members to choose between individual candidates, i.e. completely different from the closed-list PR in legislative elections. As a result of elections being organized at constituency level, each member had a number of votes equal to the constituency magnitude. Winners were declared the candidates with the highest share of votes and the order on the list was supposed to reflect their popularity. However, this did not happen in practice. Although with no formally specified role, the executive committee altered the results of the primaries and either replaced some candidates with some of its own or changed the order on the list for the legislative elections.

The electoral procedures followed by the SDKÚ-DS resembled the system used in parliamentary elections and voting took part on open list. Each party member⁵ could cast 20 votes: five for the candidates proposed by the central office and 15 for the candidates of the regions. With respect to the latter, every voter had to cast at least one vote for a candidate of every region and every associated organization. After votes were counted, the candidates were ranked according to the share of votes, but both groups of candidates were placed in previously-determined positions. The candidates nominated by the centre occupied positions 2 to 6 and all the even positions up to number 26. The candidates nominated by the regions got all the remaining positions, but there is an obligatory rotation of all regions and associated organizations at the top (Primary Election Rules of SDKÚ-DS 2009). The first 10 seats reserved for the candidates nominated by the regions were occupied by one candidate per region each plus two candidates of the associated organizations. A region's second candidate can thus occupy at best the 11th position among this group of candidates which is the 27th position on the list. This mechanism ensured territorial and social representation in the composition of

⁵ The statutes set that only those members who are at least 12 months in the party may vote in primaries. (Statutes of SDKÚ-DS)

the list. According to the regulations, the final word belonged to the executive committee that holds the power to alter the order of the selected candidates.

As for the campaign, the formal regulations of the two parties showed similar concern for the duration and means used to convey messages. The electoral campaign for the PSD primary elections was 18 days and started after all candidates were validated; it ended one day before the elections. Candidates were allowed to use only meetings with members – no campaign in the media, over the phone, or through public advertisement. The SDKÚ-DS candidates could start campaigning after they were officially nominated, what in practice means that the campaign lasts for about one month. They were allowed to present themselves at meetings of the party members or via the party’s webpage. As in the Romanian case, the campaign lasted until the last day before the primaries. The SDKÚ-DS had a special provision according to which any form of negative campaign against competing party rivals was strictly forbidden. If candidates break this rule they risk being sanctioned up to the loss of functions held in the party organization (Primary Election Rules of SDKÚ-DS 2009).

Table 1 summarizes the formal rules of the primary elections processes for the two investigated parties. The primaries have only few similarities reflected in the general aspects. Both parties conducted closed primaries (open only to party members), allocated seats to members of women and youth organizations, and allowed the voters to cast multiple votes. However, the details regarding the election process show great variation. For example, the eligibility criteria, nomination procedures, or used electoral system are different. Even in the case of multiple votes the distribution is according to the district magnitude for the PSD and according to the types of proposed candidates for the SDKÚ-DS. Similarly, while the PSD applied fully fledged quotas for women and young candidates, the SDKÚ-DS did so only to much less extent.

Table 1: The features of the primary election processes in the PSD and the SDKÚ-DS (formal rules)

	PSD	SDKÚ-DS
Mandatory primaries	No	Yes if not decided otherwise
Type of primaries	Closed primaries	Closed primaries
Purpose of primaries	Candidate selection for legislative elections	Candidate selection for legislative elections Leader of the party list for legislative elections
Level of organization	Constituency level	Constituency/country level
Eligibility criteria	Only party members 1,000 signatures Honest with professional recognition	Members and non-members 300 signatures for leader of the list 100 signatures for list candidates

	No convictions or under investigation	
Candidate nominations	Leadership of regional organizations Quota for women (25%) Quota for youth (30%)	Central office Leadership of regional organizations Quota for women (one place in the odd positions 7-25) Quota for youth (one place in the odd positions 7-25)
Electoral system	Electronic voting Individual candidates Multiple votes (N=district magnitude)	Paper voting Open lists Multiple votes (N=20, 5 for central office, 15 for regions)
Electoral campaign	Starts after all candidates register Ends the day before the primaries Lasts for 18 days Means: meetings with members	Starts as soon as the candidate registers Ends the day before the primaries Lasts for about one month Means: meetings with members, publicity on the party's website Negative campaigning was prohibited
Results	Candidates ranked on the list for parliamentary elections according to the share of votes in the primaries	Most popular central office candidates get positions 2-6 on the list for parliamentary elections Central office candidates get the even seats on the list between positions 8-26 Regional organization candidates get the odd seats on the list starting position 7 The executive committee can alter the order of each of the selected candidates

Note: The formal rules equally applied to the PSD candidates for the Chamber of Deputies and the Senate.

Participation and competitiveness

The two primary elections appear to be quite attractive for their members. The turnout percentages in Table 2 reflect a similar popularity with four out of five members casting a vote. This similarity gains relevance in the context of contrasting approaches towards the membership organizations. The PSD has inherited and developed one of the largest membership organizations in Central and Eastern Europe, while the SDKÚ-DS relies on a minimal number of members. This high level of participation can provide legitimacy to the primaries. However, this percentage is not reliable in the case of the PSD as it is the estimation provided by the party president Adrian Năstase (Radulescu 2004). There are three reasons for which his statements are likely to be biased. First, Năstase was the initiator of the primaries and a large turnout would have supported his idea. Second, when referring to the turnout he mentioned that almost 500,000 members voted, an equivalent of 82%; this means that the total number of party members was over 600,000. However, the official number of members that the PSD had around the legislative elections in 2004 was less than 400,000 (Gherghina 2012).

Third, the aggregate number of votes was not recorded at country level since the primaries took place at constituency level. Turnout was reported only in several

constituencies and thus aggregate calculations are not possible. Even the reported turnout in constituencies is not reliable since there were several problems. In the Suceava constituency the PSD secretary got 18,022 votes while the turnout was of 15,710 members. In the Vrancea constituency a PSD minister got 13,539 votes and only 13,155 members voted. A similar case was in the Mehedinti constituency where a central figure of the party received 10,200 votes out of the 9,918 who went to the polls (Georgescu 2012).

Contrary to these fuzzy percentages, the figures for the SDKÚ-DS are accurate and indicate no real difference in the level of participation between the three competitions. The explanation is relatively simple: the party as a whole held its elections on the same day. Thus the selectors were motivated to participate on all parts of primaries. Equally important in explaining the similar levels of participation is that the candidates for the centre and regions were listed on the same ballot.

Table 2: Participation in primary elections

	Contest	Eligible party members	Turnout	Turnout (in %)
PSD	General primaries	385,481	n/a	82
	List leader	5 458	4 382	80,29
SDKÚ-DS	Candidates of the centre	5 458	4 367	80,01
	Candidates of the regions	5 458	4 367	80,01

A key aspect of the primaries is their degree of competitiveness (Table 3). In reporting the situation for the PSD we distinguish between the candidates for the Chamber of Deputies and the Senate. The lower Chamber of the Romanian Parliament has more seats and in the 2004 legislative elections the political parties competed for 314. Its size varies across elections and this number does not include the seats reserved to the ethnic minorities. The Senate, with fairly similar functions and electoral procedures, consisted of 136 seats in the 2004 legislative elections; due to these resemblances the Romanian parties gain similar percentages of seats in the elections for both Chambers. The number of candidates in the primaries mirrored the size of the Chambers, but the ratio was comparable. For the Chamber of Deputies there were 2.3 candidates for one seat and 5.6 candidates for one realistic seat, while for the Senate there were 2.1 candidates for one seat and 5.2 candidates for one realistic seat. In the primary elections have run 98

incumbent deputies (out of 170 in the 2000-2004 term in office) and 31 senators (out of 69 in the 2000-2004 term in office).⁶

The SDKÚ-DS has significant differences across the competitions. Above all, there was almost no competition for the list leadership or between the candidates proposed by the central office. In essence, all the candidates could be sure of getting on the final ballot.⁷ Moreover, all the allocated positions – according to the rules (see above) – were realistic⁸ and gave them good chances of being elected in the legislative elections. Consequently, even if they wanted, party members were not able to throw these candidates completely off the list in the framework of the primaries but only determine their order. On the other hand, the candidates in the region experienced a highly competitive process because the number of nominees was ten times higher than the number of realistic seats. Although in this case, too, a majority of the candidates were assured of a place on the ballot, only a small number of them were able to place sufficiently high on the list.

A look at the incumbents also provides important information. Out of the 31 party MPs from the previous term in office, 23 have run in the primaries. Their distribution across competitions is also illustrative: incumbents were the only ones competing for the list leadership and made the majority of the centre-based list of candidates. The competition within the SDKÚ-DS was mostly closed with little room for newcomers; the latter were given more chances for the region nominations.

Table 3: Competitiveness in the primary elections

	Contest	Candidates (Incumbents)	Nominations to be allocated	Realistic seats	Selectors' votes	VCI
PSD	Deputies	722 (98)	314	110	District magnitude	n/a
	Senators	287 (31)	136	55	District magnitude	n/a
SDKÚ- DS	Leader	2 (2)	2	2	1	0,62
	Centre	14 (10)	14	14	5	0,52
	Regions	150 (11)	134	14	15	0,51

⁶ In 2004 there was a decrease of the realistic seats compared to 2000 for two reasons: the number of MPs was reduced and the PSD faced the competition of a strong alliance formed by the democrats and liberals.

⁷ This guarantee also affects the loser of the contest for leader. As only elite party officials enter this competition, the loser gets second position on the list. This happened in both cases when primaries have been used. Based on this, only fourteen candidates from the centre are nominated, and the best of these gets the third position on the list.

⁸ The number of realistic seats a party is expected to win was determined as the average of the party's previous results in 2002 and 2006. In them the SDKÚ-DS won 28 and 31 seats, which yields an average of 30 seats (rounded off). For each of the competitions it was determined how many of the realistic seats belonged to it, and these numbers were used independently in the calculations.

As for the representation of women, we have data only about SDKÚ-DS.⁹ The results of the 2010 primaries saw 23 women on the final list, six of whom occupied realistic positions including Radičová as the leader. In the group of candidates for the centre, three women won realistic positions, and one of them was in third place on the list. Among the candidates from the regions two women were successful, but both placed below first twenty positions (23 and 27). This shows that women can expect a better placement in the more centralized and exclusive nominating processes. In the case of the SDKÚ-DS, the executive committee proposes the candidates for the centre, by which its rules in effect place them in the foremost positions on the list. When compared to other Slovak parties, the SDKÚ-DS stands fairly well in regard of women representation.

Political consequences for parties

At a glance, the adoption of primaries appears to have a beneficial influence on the PSD's membership organization. Between 2000 and 2004, the number of members witnessed a significant increase (Table 4). In the following legislative elections when primaries were no longer used, the number of members decreased. However, this positive relationship between primaries and membership organization is likely to be spurious. The history of PSD's membership from the first post-communist decade illustrates that the party gained members when it was in government. This was also the case for the 2000-2004 term in office, while between 2004 and 2008 the party was in opposition. In addition, the increase has to be considered in light of the unfair competition and electoral fraud during primaries. Therefore, it is more likely that the high number of members in 2004 to be the result of candidates' desire to win primaries by all means rather than an increased attractiveness of the party for citizens. For example, in their attempt to create unfair advantages during the primary elections, some local leaders enrolled new members overnight. In the Iasi constituency the party membership increased by 3,000 members (from 14,000 to 17,500) in less than two months. Media reports, based on accusations coming from the opponents of the local leaders, claim that most of these new members were offered financial benefits in the form of social assistance (Onofrei 2004). Illustrative for this argument is the very small difference between the share of members in 2000 (before primaries) and 2008 (after primaries).

⁹ The quota mechanism for women in SDKÚ-DS assures only that a woman will be nominated in at least one unpaired slot from 7th to 25th place.

Accordingly, the members recruited to enhance the electoral support during primaries had only short-term commitments and left the party immediately after.

The data on SDKÚ-DS membership tell a similar story where the primaries appear to have no impact in attracting new members. The party is situated on a descending slope starting 2006 irrespective of a use of primaries. The explanations for these changes lie in the longitudinal political development and performance of the party. The number of members changed from year to year, reflecting the party's position in the system of power. After losing the 2006 elections the party went into the opposition, and membership rapidly declined. A turnaround came midway through the electoral term, with membership growth culminating at the end of 2010, when the party again found itself in the government. In the following years the membership fell sharply again, along with the breakup of the Radičová government and the outbreak of the "Gorilla" scandal.

Table 4: Membership organizations

	Last election before primaries		Primaries		First election after primaries	
	Number	% of the electorate	Number	% of the electorate	Number	% of the electorate
PSD	304,713	1.72	385,481	2.09	290,116	1.58
SDKÚ-DS	8 569	0.20	6 842	0.16	5 223	0.12

Regarding the electoral performance, the PSD appears to have a stable electorate in the most recent three legislative elections (2000, 2004, and 2008). In 2004, the party managed to secure a fairly similar share of as in 2000 (almost 37% of the votes). This electoral stability does not appear to be necessarily linked to the adoption of primaries as in 2008, the party registered a similar electoral result. Instead of primaries, one possible explanation for the stable electoral performance is the structure of competition. In the last decade, once the number of parliamentary parties was reduced to five, the alternatives were simpler for voters. Two parties – the radical right and the ethnic party – have clear target audiences. Practically, the rest of the electorate (approximately 80%) has three options: the PSD, the Democrats, or the Liberals. Moreover, the decision of the PSD to merge with many centre-left parties allowed the party to encapsulate the preferences of the voters to the left.

As for the consequences of primaries for the SDKÚ-DS, the most important aspect is the party's results in the general elections. Four parliamentary elections have been held since the party's inception, but primaries have been held only twice. The party did

not hold primaries ahead of the 2006 and 2012 elections, citing time constraints, as both elections were called early.

Table 5: The electoral performance of the PSD and SDKÚ-DS

	Elections	Votes (in %)	Turnout (in %)	Primaries
PSD	First (1992)	28	76.29	no
	Second (1996)	22.30	76.01	no
	Third (2000)	36,85	65.31	no
	Fourth (2004)	37	58.51	yes
	Fifth (2008)	33,63	39.20	no
	Sixth (2012)	59,34	41.76	no
SDKÚ-DS	First (2002)	15.09	70.06	yes
	Second (2006)	18.35	54.67	no
	Third (2010)	15.42	58.83	yes
	Fourth (2012)	6.09	59.11	no

Notes: The electoral support for the PSD is an average between the shares of votes for the two Chambers. In 2004 and 2008 the reported electoral results are for the alliance with the Conservative Party; in 2012 the PNL was a new member of this alliance.

Sources: IDEA, Central Electoral Bureau in Romania, Statistical Office of the Slovak Republic.

The data provided in Table 5 show that with the exception of the most recent elections the results of SDKÚ-DS were fairly balanced. Given the importance of the relative values, both the best and worst results (18.35% and 6.09% respectively) were achieved in elections which were not preceded by primaries. Contrariwise, when primaries were held they did not have a substantial effect on the party's results, which were rather average. This was true both in 2002 and in 2010.

One possible explanation would be the insufficient public awareness of the primaries. Although the SDKÚ-DS gained some media coverage because of the primaries (Rybář 2001: 21-23), in 2010 this was overwhelmingly devoted to the competition for the position of the list leader between Radičová and Mikloš. Conversely, filling the remaining positions on the list was solely an internal party matter with little publicity. The SDKÚ-DS also plays into this effect by not releasing the results of its primaries to public.¹⁰ Objectively speaking, the primary elections are barely registered by society, which limits the influence of this process on the party's election results. As practice shows, the party's election results were dependent on other, more pronounced factors.¹¹

¹⁰ Data of primaries from 2010 were received from SDKÚ-DS on request.

¹¹ These phenomena include tactical voting of SDKÚ-DS's electorate in elections 2010 leading part of the party voters to support other smaller centre-right parties. The aim was to prevent a possible slump of this segment of the party spectrum. The devastating result of the party in 2012 was mainly caused by the so called *Gorilla* scandal. A document was circulated ahead of the 2012 election, alleging large-scale corrupt

Conclusions

This paper has analyzed the use of primaries in two CEE political parties. Each of these had its own rationale behind the implementation of inclusive candidate selection. The Romanian PSD adopted primaries more than a decade after its creation and understood primaries mainly as an experiment. The major goals were to maintain a stronger link with the electorate, to improve the image of the party, and to raise the quality of its candidates. The Slovak SDKÚ-DS launched primaries immediately after its formation as this step helped the party to emphasize its uniqueness. In light of these different drivers, the organization of primaries varied greatly. The PSD used primaries only for one legislative election and abandoned in the subsequent elections (i.e. the provisions became optional in the statute). The SDKÚ-DS chose a different way as it assigned primaries to all types of elections and made them half-mandatory (held if not decided otherwise by executive committee). With respect to candidates, the comparison reveals that the PSD uses various criteria restricts candidacies to members, whereas the SDKÚ-DS allows all Slovak citizens to enter the competition. The differences also affect the usage of quotas which are extensively implemented by the PSD but in a minimalist way by the SDKÚ-DS.

With respect to the most important formal aspects, the PSD's primary elections were rather decentralized but with a strong final say of the executive committee which could alter the will of participating members. In the SDKÚ-DS this type of control was only formally stated but without real implementation. The main reason may be that the party elites had anyway a very strong position due to majority of realistic seats reserved for their candidates. The executive committee of SDKÚ-DS had no need to alter the results of primaries as it controls main part of the whole process from the beginning. Both parties also differed in some practical aspects as was the electronic or paper form of ballot and the electoral system itself which was mainly caused by the system used for legislative elections. What is important is the fact that in both parties the primaries were very attractive for the members and the participation rates were high.

Apart from these differences, the use of primaries share a few features. One of them is their closed character, being available only to members. One further similarity is the character of the campaign: short and limited with respect to the means through

practices during the period of Dzurinda's second government. This led to a sharp drop in SDKÚ's electoral performance (Spáč 2010: 101).

which the candidates can advertise themselves. As for the consequences, none of the primaries had a relevant effect on the size of membership and electoral performance; their development and changes have different determinants.

The latter can be one explanation for the absence of systematic use of primaries in the PSD and the SDKÚ-DS. Another explanation lies in the attitudes of the party elites. Our description of the primaries indicated that elites continue to understand the selection of candidates as a process in which they have to hold a strong say and rarely allow regular members to get the upper hand. Both elements are likely to perpetuate the poor tradition of inclusive intraparty decision-making processes in the region.

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