

The Influence of Political Parties' Coalitions on the Electoral Program Fulfillment

Ondřej Kuba, Jan Stejskal, Viktor Prokop

Abstract

The aim of this paper is to analyse the situation of political parties in Bohuslav Sobotka's government, which concerns political promises and declarations. The analysis focused specifically on the fulfilment of the coalition party promises of Prime Minister Bohuslav Sobotka's government. The input data of the research consisted of a prepared set of testable political promises from the pre-election programs of selected political parties. The promises were compared with the contents of the coalition agreement, the government's policy statement. It was found that coalition political parties selected by the government within the framework of coalition cooperation managed to enforce approximately 36 % of their election promises. At program level, 24 % of promises were enforced. In areas that increase the personal budget of voters, government political parties have pushed 76 % of promises. Regardless of their cooperation, they made approx. 52 % of the election promises during the parliamentary term. The dominant party of the government was the CSSD.

Keywords: Coalitions, programs, governments, elections, promises, public choice

JEL Classification: H10, H11, H83

1 Introduction

The distribution of political forces based on election results is the prerequisite for the emergence and stability of governments in democratic systems. In the context of multi-party representation, the emergence of the government, unlike the dual party, is conditional upon negotiation through which political parties agree to form a decisive majority. In this way, a so-called monochrome government, coalition government, or transitional government may be created, agreed by various political entities. Besides the rise of the government the result of the negotiations results in several side effects including not only concessions and compromises in the program, but also in the personnel, as well as political bargaining. The content of the program statement of the coalition government is usually different from the original promoted priorities of individual political entities in the pre-election period. Voters do not have to take this behaviour as being unequivocally positive, highlighting the inefficiency of public choice.

The process of political negotiation has been the subject of political and economic research. Based on exploring the behaviour of political entities in the negotiations, the so-called coalition theory emerged, which builds on game theory and assumes rational behaviour of all negotiating actors. The manifestation of rational behaviour is to push through the maximum level of the electoral program with as few concessions as possible. This success is due to several significant factors in the coalition cabinet. For example, Peleg (1981) and Deemen (1989) mentioned the important role of the dominant player in the government formation process, i.e. the most represented political party in Parliament. This political party is practically impossible to circumvent in the negotiation. If this party is also centrally oriented, according to Crombez (1996), the government's program will subsequently be the same as this party has. One cannot forget the significance and importance of some small parties, which, according to Laver (1998), may have a strong expressive position, because without them most would arise. Such parties may blackmail other parties. The ability to enforce the party's electoral program does not only depend on its involvement in the coalition agreement, but also on its compliance with the coalition partner. For example, according to Thies (2001), the parties use political deputies appointed to coalition partner ministries. Similarly, according to Pukelis (2016), the chairpersons of parliamentary committees also carry out the control work. An important element in

the program enforcement process is the occupation of ministerial seats. Political parties are demanding such seats that are their priority. Warwick (1996) states that government policy is determined by the political party that controls the Treasury, as it decides which spending programs the government will financially support. All these factors affect the success of political parties more or less in the enforcement of the program.

The aim of this paper is to analyse the situation of political parties in Bohuslav Sobotka's government, which concerns political promises and declarations. It will be evaluated how many promises from the party's electoral programs have become part of the government program statement and how many of them have been successfully completed. The partial goal is to check whether the CSSD - as the winning party and the party dominating in the government - implemented the comparative advantages according to the assumption of Baron (1991). Theoretical Background

In parliamentary democracies based on the multi-party system, which includes the Czech Republic, a government is usually formed by several political parties. The political parties in one coalition cooperate under certain conditions and in different forms. Strøm and Nyblade (2009) generally define coalitions as groups of individuals cooperating to promote common interests. Specifically, politicians are united to lead the government to transform a wide range of social requirements into public policies. This action can be considered significant in democratic systems with multiple political parties, where it is decided by the majority rule. In such an environment, individual parties do not reach an absolute majority, so they do not have the opportunity to push through any programs without the support of other political parties.

Luebbert (1983) considers the process of creating coalitions far more significant than the public elections. The argument for this claim is that the composition of the government often does not match the election results. This is evidenced, for example, by the results of elections to the Chamber of Deputies of the Czech Parliament in the elections in 2010 (Stegmaier, Vlachová, 2011). At that time, a coalition government was formed, but it did not include a winning political party.

The formation of coalition governments brings many questions that experts from different disciplines seek to answer. They focus on the analysis of the parties' suggestions for cooperation, its form, the process of division of offices or the realized policy. All these attributes affect the process of forming a coalition government, its subsequent stability and, in the event of a conflict, may even cause its collapse. In other words, the coalition is a grouping of two or more entities promoting a common purpose, which naturally involves a series of disputes. On the one hand, these disputes stem from satisfying the different needs of voters and the associated division of authorities (Strøm and Nyblade, 2009). On the other hand, the individual ambitions of politicians, for which the desire for power, prestige and effort to be the centre of attention cause instability (Budge and Laver, 1986). Thus, when negotiating a coalition, political parties need to know their potential partners and be able to recognize the benefits and costs of collaboration. Where there are real prospects for agreement and political parties decide to cooperate, rules and forms of cooperation are set out.

The establishment of a co-enforced policy is one of the contradictory areas. Strøm and Müller (1999) state in this context that the political parties in the joint government do "the business" (the logrolling) because they have different preferences across a wide range of issues and will seek to ensure maximum political, official and electoral benefits for themselves. The leading political party that manages the negotiations obtains the comparative advantage by Baron (1991). This party can select other partners strategically and offer collaboration only to those they choose. Whenever political parties are rational and strategic, they want to maximize benefits at every point in the negotiations. It will certainly be reflected in the composition of the cabinet or government program. For example, Bäck, Debus and Dumont (2011) believe that political parties choose the ones that are closest to them according to the electoral program. It should be remembered that even they will prioritize their own interests throughout the period of their cooperation and will want to fulfil as many points of their own election program as possible. The cooperating political (government) parties become partners in the

coalition, but at the same time they remain significant competitors as they often fight for the same electorate.

The aim of this paper is to analyse the situation of political parties in Bohuslav Sobotka's government, which concerns political promises and declarations. It will be evaluated how many promises from the party's electoral programs have become part of the government program statement and how many of them have been successfully completed. The partial goal is to check whether the CSSD - as the winning party and the party dominating in the government - implemented the comparative advantages according to the assumption of Baron (1991).

2 Data and Research Method

The analysis of election promises fulfilment will be based on the **commitment approach** defined by Royed (1996). This approach was used for analysis of electoral programs in studies by, for example, Schermann and Ennser-Jednastik (2012), Naurin (2014) or Thomson et al. (2017), and assumes the promise of the party as a unit of analysis obliging the party to take action or produce a result that can be objectively assessed to meet or fail. Royed's potential promise includes a commitment phrase (we will "push", "propose", "support", "secure", "provide", etc.), and a goal or policy to which the party commits.

With these methodological procedures we analysed the election programs of the CSSD (CSSD, 2013), KDU-CSL (KDU-CSL, 2013), ANO 2011 (ANO, 2013) and the government policy statement, which were coalition parties in Bohuslav Sobotka's government of (2014-2017). The primary data set (page promise set) has been modified as follows:

- Statements by political parties that are not clearly defined by Royed (1996), will be transformed into this format. Long promises will be made in shortened form, declarations of political parties containing more results will be divided into more partial promises and additional knowledge will be added to ambiguous promises.
- If the political party's declaration contains more than one result (in one sentence), the promises will be divided.
- Only promises that can be assessed for compliance or non-compliance will be analysed. If its performance exceeds the electoral period under review, it will not be included in the analysis. Similarly, those that are not binding, measurable, specific, unambiguous will be excluded.
- Any promise whose fulfilment is not dependent on the government's decision, but for example in the competence of territorial and professional self-governments or based on European Union legislation, will not be included in the data set. Promises in the preparation of various strategies and concepts that are produced by the public administration will also be excluded.

It follows from the above mentioned that a testable promise must be binding, measurable, specific, time-bound, unambiguous and must be the result of government action. Successful fulfilment of such a defined promise will manifest itself, on the one hand, in the size or structure of public budgets, or in the legislative obligation to fulfil something or to claim something. Any legislative change (introduction, amendment, revocation) will be considered as compliance with the legislative promises, although the party's agenda may include a vague notion of "fair", "complete", and so on.

Promises will also be considered fulfilled, for example, by a resolution of the Constitutional Court (a case of a taxpayer returning a tax to a working pensioner) or by a law created by a previous government. Such point promises are considered promises of the status quo, which does not change anything but confirms the party's preference.

The data sets of the political parties' promises will then be used for graphical presentation of the results and discussion.

3 Results and Discussion

Real electoral programs of political parties were modified according to the above-mentioned methodological principles. This resulted in a target group containing 237 testable promises (88 promises of the ČSSD, 62 promises of the KDU-CSL, 87 promises of ANO 2011). These promises oblige political parties to change legislation, or to implement another concrete and objectively verifiable commitment. The overall success of political parties in negotiating a **coalition agreement**, expressed as the proportion of all promises included in the coalition agreement to the total number of promises in the party program, is presented in Figure 1.

Figure 1 – Share of promises included in the coalition agreement

Source: authors' calculations based on the primary data

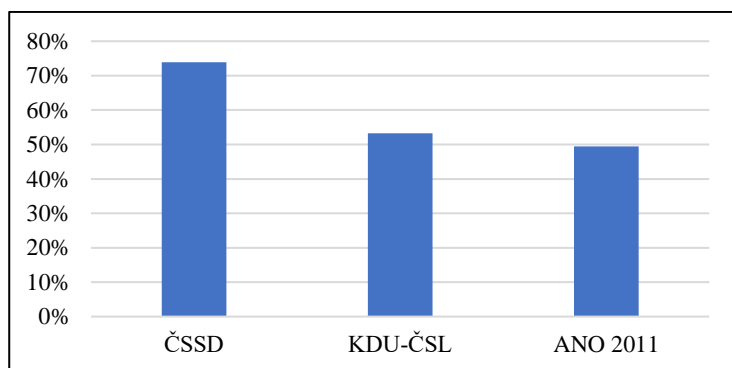
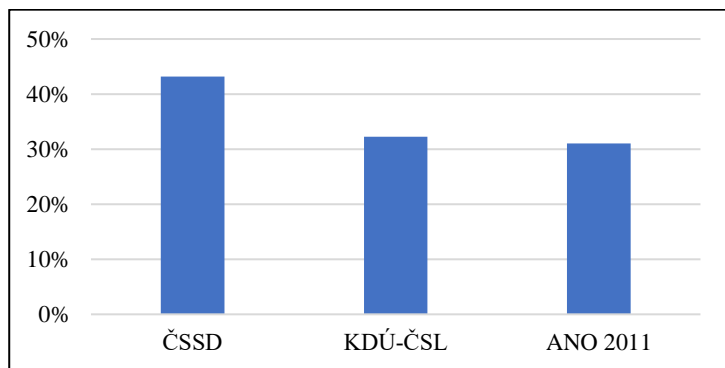


Figure 1 shows that the ČSSD managed to enforce almost 74 % of all tested promises in the coalition agreement. Although the KDU-CSL had less than a quarter of the tested promises - fewer than the other parties - it managed to push 53 % into the coalition agreement. The fewest promises in the coalition agreement were pushed through by ANO 2011, which only pushed 49% of all tested promises from its pre-election program into the coalition agreement. The overall ratio of promises included in the coalition agreement is as follows: ČSSD 46 %, ANO 2011 31 % and KDU-CSL 23 %. The coalition agreement was based primarily on the ČSSD program and confirmed the strong bargaining position of the party that sets up the coalition.

The negotiation process does not end with the formation of a coalition agreement. Furthermore, the coalition parties must be able to jointly enforce the promises made to the treaty. Figure 2 shows the proportion of coalitions of fulfilled promises, broken down by party from whose programs the promises came.

Figure 2 – Share of fulfilled promises from coalition agreement

Source: authors' calculations based on the primary data



The government coalition pushed through a total of 85 of the 141 tested promises (60 %). The individual political parties had a relatively low success in promoting election promises. The ČSSD has pushed 38 of the 88 promises (43 %) into coalition cooperation over the entire term. KDU-ČSL pushed 20 out of 62 promises (32 %) and ANO 2011 only 27 out of 87 promises (31 %). The order of successfully implemented promises based on the programs of the parties is the same as the order of the parties in the number of promises entered into the coalition agreement. Most promises were based on the ČSSD program, followed by ANO 2011 and KDU-ČSL.

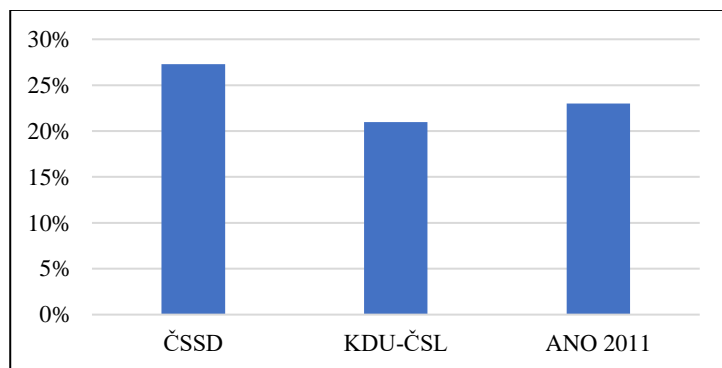
The results of the analysis show that the political parties forming the coalition have realized their election promises in the same proportion as they were enforced in the coalition agreement. This means that the coalition has been balanced in the enforcement of the program and there has been no significant promotion of goals from the one-party program to the detriment of the other party. This balance probably stems from the programmatic intersection of the parties.

A more significant document than a coalition agreement may be a **government program statement**. This is based on a coalition agreement, but is limited to the government's priorities, which should be met by individual ministries during the public choice. The analysis shows that political parties have made fewer promises to the government program statement than to the coalition agreement - in total, 91 from 237 promises (38 %). ČSSD added to the government statement 42 % of the promises. KDU-ČSL pushed 39 % of promises into the program statement (24 out of 62) and ANO 2011 pushed 35% of promises (30 out of 87). The order of success of the parties in promising in the program declaration is identical with the order of the parties in the success of realizing promises in the coalition agreement.

However, the representation of the parties' promises in the government program statement is more even than in the case of the coalition agreement, as the ČSSD's promise ratio is not so significant compared to the other parties. The overall success of the parties in fulfilling the tested promises included in the government's policy statement is presented in Figure 3. The graph shows that the most realized promises from the government program statement came from the ČSSD program (27 %), 23 % of the ANO 2011 program and 21 % of the election promises were fulfilled for the KDU-ČSL.

Figure 3 – Share of realized promises from government program statement

Source: authors' calculations based on the primary data

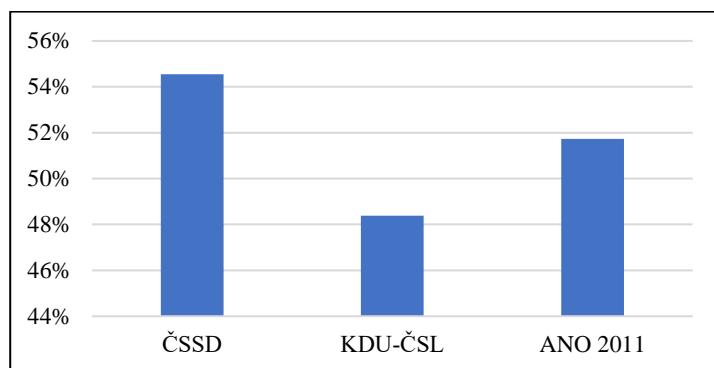


As in the case of the coalition agreement, there was no extreme realization of promises from only one political party. The parties' promises are almost the same as the promises made by the parties to the government program statement.

Coalition political parties may in some cases vote in Parliament with parties other than those they are in coalition with. This collaboration can work, for example, on an ad hoc basis. The purpose of such party behaviour is to push through the electoral program to the maximum extent. Figure 4 shows the ratios of the fulfilled promises against all promises of the parties (to this amount we count also the promises that were not included in coalition agreement and government program statement).

Figure 4 – Share of fulfilled promises of coalition parties

Source: authors' calculations based on the primary data

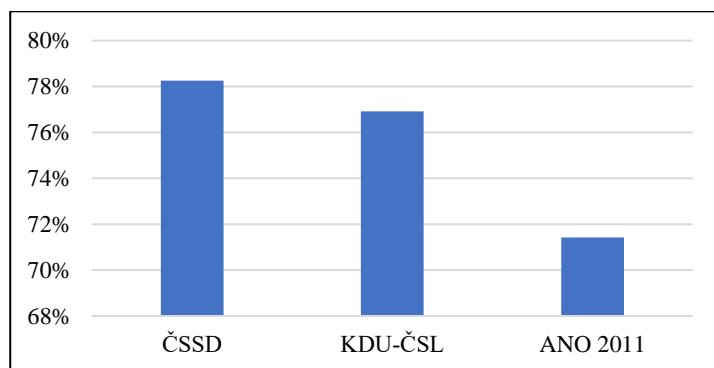


It is clear from Figure 4 that governmental political parties in Parliament have been able to push through about half of their electoral program promises, regardless of whether their promises are part of a coalition agreement or whether they pursue a coalition or opposition program. The majority of promises outside the coalition agreement were managed by ANO 2011 (approximately 20 %).

In the final part of the analysis, an evaluation of the promises' fulfilment is realized. Just these promises were analysed which clearly had a positive influence on the voter's budget. These promises include reducing the tax burden on voters in the form of various tax reliefs, reducing V.A.T, raising minimum wages, abolishing doctor's fees etc. The analysis is based on a fiscal choice (the voter does not only choose according to preferences but also according to the amount of the pension and the tax system). The prerequisite, therefore, is that the parties will endeavour to enforce measures that will increase their popularity by the next election. Fulfilment of these promises should be a clear priority for the parties, as it directly affects voters. Figure 5 shows the fulfilment of these selected promises.

Figure 5 – Fulfilled promises with positive impact on personal income

Source: authors' calculations based on the primary data



Together, the political parties made 50 promises in the areas of tax relief, tax cuts, salary growth, pension growth, minimum wage increases, and so on. Out of these, 23 promises were made by the ČSSD (fulfilled 18 promises; 78 %). The KDU-ČSL proposed 13 changes and completed 10 (77 %). ANO 2011's electoral program contained 14 promises, of which 10 (71 %) were pushed forward. Thus, this is the evidence that political parties are primarily seeking to promote political goals that will give them voter support. While in total, the parties managed to push about half of their program, they have pushed around three-quarters of their programs in this area.

4 Conclusion

This paper analysed the fulfilment of selected promises of coalition political parties in the government of Bohuslav Sobotka (2014-2017). The objective of the analysis was to demonstrate the extent to which political markets distort the formation of coalitions. The parties must make several concessions and compromises in the formation of coalitions, and this behaviour can be considered a voter scam. They elect parties based on electoral promises, which the political parties will eventually revise in the coalition negotiations and will not even include a substantial part of the government program.

The political parties forming Bohuslav Sobotka's government only enforced about 50 % of their program in the coalition agreement (73 % for the CSSD). In the government's program statement, 35-42 % of parties' election promises were included. Just 20-27 % of them were fulfilled with the government's cooperation. The strongest party in promoting pre-election promises was clearly the CSSD, which was able to push through the most promises from all parties (both to the coalition agreement and to the government program statement). The reason for its success is probably its negotiator status, as the party won the election, formed the government, and had the most ministerial posts through which it could pursue its own policy.

Political parties, regardless of coalition cooperation, have managed to meet approximately 50 % of all their promises over the entire parliamentary term. With promises that can be considered significant to voters, as they have a positive impact on personal budgets, the success in fulfilment of the promises was higher. The parties have fulfilled more than 70 % of the promises.

The lack of analysis is a significant reduction in the data set, as political parties could eventually make more promises from their program. However, verifying all the promises would not be realistic, because for some promises there are no benchmarks against which performance can be evaluated, or the verification would require additional evaluation criteria. However, the voters themselves are not able to evaluate all parties' promises in the process of choosing and therefore the commitment approach used can be described as enough and meaningful.

Acknowledgements

This paper was supported by the Student Grant Competition (No. 18) of University of Pardubice in 2019.

References

- [1] BARON, D. P. (1991). A Spatial Bargaining Theory of Government Formation in Parliamentary Systems. *The American Political Science Review*, Vol. 85, no. 1, pp. 137-164.
- [2] BÄCK, H., DEBUS, M., & DUMONT, P. (2011). Who gets what in coalition governments? Predictors of portfolio allocation in parliamentary democracies. *European Journal Of Political Research*, Vol. 50, no. 4, pp. 441-478.
- [3] BUDGE, I., & LAVER, M. (1986). Office Seeking and Policy Pursuit in Coalition Theory. *Legislative Studies Quarterly*, Vol. 11, no. 4, pp. 485-506.
- [4] CROMBEZ, C. (1996). Minority governments, minimal winning coalitions and surplus majorities in parliamentary systems. *European Journal Of Political Research*, Vol. 29, no. 1, pp. 1-29.
- [5] DEEMEN, A. M. A. (1989). Dominant players and minimum size coalitions. *European Journal Of Political Research*, Vol. 17, no. 3, pp. 313-332.

- [6] LAVER, M. (1998). Models of Government Formation. *Annual Review Of Political Science*, Vol. 1, no. 1, pp. 1-25.
- [7] LUEBBERT, G. M. (1983). Coalition Theory and Government Formation in Multiparty Democracies. *Comparative Politics*, Vol. 15, no. 2, pp. 235–249.
- [8] NAURIN, E. (2014). Is a Promise a Promise? Election Pledge Fulfilment in Comparative Perspective Using Sweden as an Example. *West European Politics*, Vol. 37, no. 5, pp. 1046-1064.
- [9] PELEG, B. (1981). Coalition formation in simple games with dominant players. *International Journal Of Game Theory*, Vol. 10, no. 1, pp. 11-33.
- [10] PUKELIS, L. (2016). The role of parliamentary committee chairs in coalition governments: office and policy theses reconsidered. *East European Politics*, Vol. 32, no. 2, pp. 215-235.
- [11] ROYED, T. J. (1996). Testing the Mandate Model in Britain and the United States: Evidence from the Reagan and Thatcher Eras. *British Journal Of Political Science*, Vol. 26, no. 1, pp. 45-80.
- [12] SCHERMANN, K., & ENNSER-JEDENASTIK, L. (2012). Explaining coalition-bargaining outcomes. *Party Politics*, Vol. 20, no. 5, pp. 791-801.
- [13] STEGMAIER, M., & VLACHOVÁ, K. (2011). The parliamentary election in the Czech Republic, May 2010. *Electoral Studies*, Vol. 30, no. 1, pp. 238-241.
- [14] STRØM, K., & MÜLLER, W. C. (1999). The keys to togetherness: Coalition agreements in parliamentary democracies. *The Journal Of Legislative Studies*, Vol. 5, no. 3-4, pp. 255-282.
- [15] STRØM, K. W., & NYBLADE, B. (2009). *Coalition Theory and Government Formation*. London: The Oxford Handbook of Comparative Politics.
- [16] THIES, M. F. (2001). Keeping Tabs on Partners: The Logic of Delegation in Coalition Governments. *American Journal Of Political Science*, Vol. 45, no. 3, pp. 580-598.
- [17] THOMSON, R., ROYED, T., NAURIN, E., ARTÉS, J., COSTELLO, R., ENNSER-JEDENASTIK, L., ET AL. (2017). The Fulfillment of Parties' Election Pledges: A Comparative Study on the Impact of Power Sharing. *American Journal Of Political Science*, Vol. 61, no. 3, pp 527-542.
- [18] WARWICK, P. V. (1996). Coalition Government Membership in West European Parliamentary Democracies. *British Journal Of Political Science*, Vol. 26, no. 04, pp. 471-499.

Contact information

Ing. Ondřej Kuba

University of Pardubice, Faculty of Economics and Administration
Studentska 95, 532 10 Pardubice, Czech Republic
e-mail: st44613@student.upce.cz

doc. Ing. Jan Stejskal, Ph.D.

University of Pardubice, Faculty of Economics and Administration
Studentska 95, 532 10 Pardubice, Czech Republic
e-mail: jan.stejskal@upce.cz

Ing. Viktor Prokop, Ph.D.

University of Pardubice, Faculty of Economics and Administration

Studentska 95, 532 10 Pardubice, Czech Republic

e-mail: viktor.prokop@upce.cz