Elections and campaign of the European Parliament

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Abstract
The Slovak Republic has been a part of the European Union since 1st of May 2004. During that time, Slovakia has moved significantly forward. The Slovak economy was thriving and kept in good shape. Thanks to Euro funds, many parts and corners of Slovakia have reconstructed. Thanks to cooperation with international organisations, science and research are at a high level, and we can compete in the free market. But nothing could be done if we had closed borders in front of our neighbours. Thanks to the European family, we have become part of the developed world. Many political representatives raise the issue of the Slovak Republic's withdrawal from the structures of the European Union. Many Slovaks are also in favour of the possibility of the Slovak Republic leaving the European Union. The European Union is not perfect, and it has its downsides. On the other hand, the European Union is a good project and, thanks to the European Union, we are a respected country in the international forum. The Slovak Republic should not close itself off from the world if it wants to move forward. In this article, we will focus on the competencies of Members of the European Parliament. We will focus on the election campaign and the results of 2014 and 2019 EU parliament elections. There are no more slogans in the political campaign. Politicians proclaiming these statements ran for parliament in the European Union as candidates seeking reform. This is also what the election campaign for the European Parliament brings. In this post, we will try to look at the issue of the election campaign for the European Parliament. This work does not claim a comprehensive view of the election campaign for the European Parliament, but we analyse certain aspects of it, in this article.

Keywords: campaign, elections, European Parliament

1 European Parliament

The competencies of the deputies of the National Council of the Slovak Republic and the competencies of the MEPs are diametrically different. However, these differences are not presented in the media enough, so the Slovak public has no place to learn about these competencies. It has an impact on the turnout of EU parliament elections in Slovakia, which is very low in Slovakia. This is due to the public's lack of information about the competences and powers of MEPs. Currently, there are efforts of internet influencers to raise the awareness of youth about policy Young people, especially first-time voters, are also the primary group for political parties, because their vote in elections is important. It is not so easy to find out how the first voter decides, so the program of individual political parties also thinks of the first voters. The role of the European Parliament is to be responsible for legislative, budgetary and control policy. The European Parliament is a body elected directly in elections. It is the European Union's legislator, elected by citizens across the EU every 5 years. The European elections were last held on 23-26 May 2019.

If we take a closer look at the tasks of the European Parliament, we will find that it has three main roles. The legislative role consists of:
• Together with the Council of the EU, it adopts legislation based on proposals from the European Commission.
• Decides on international agreements.
• Decides on EU enlargement.
• Evaluates the Commission's work program and asks it to propose legislation. " (EUROPE 2019)

The second role of the European Parliament is to scrutinise:
• It exercises democratic control over all EU institutions.
• It elects the President of the Commission and approves the Commission as an EU body. By voting on a motion of censure, it may force the Commission to resign during its term of office.
• Grants discharge, t. j. approves the use of funds from the EU budget.
• Examines citizens' petitions and sets up committees of inquiry.
• Negotiates monetary policy with the European Central Bank.
• Controls the Commission and the Council.
• Establishes election observation missions. " (EUROPE 2019)

The third and final task is budgetary:
• It draws up the EU budget together with the Council.
• Approves the EU's long-term budget - the multiannual financial framework. " (EUROPE 2019)

1.1 Legislation of the SR for elections to the EP

Act of 29 May 2014 on the Conditions for the Exercise of the Right to Vote and on Amendments to Certain Acts no. 180/2014 Coll. amends and supplements the laws relating to elections to the European Parliament. In principle, the law is not very different from regular elections with small changes. As in other elections, anyone with an active right to vote can cast a ballot, and there are no further legal obstacles. "The right to vote in the European Parliament in the territory of the Slovak Republic belongs to a citizen of the Slovak Republic who has a permanent residence in the territory of the Slovak Republic and a citizen of another Member State of the European Union who has a permanent residence in the Slovak Republic." (NOVEASPI 2019) The right to be elected to the European Parliament belongs to anyone who at least on the day of the election acquires the right to vote and has a permanent residence in the territory of the Slovak Republic. The territory of the Slovak Republic forms one constituency in the elections to the European Parliament. "Elections to the European Parliament are announced by the President of the National Council of the Slovak Republic based on a decision of the Council of the European Union no later than 110 days before the day of their holding. The statement shall state the number of Members of the European Parliament who are to be elected to the European Parliament in the territory of the Slovak Republic. " (NOVEASPI 2019)

The recalculation of parliamentary mandates is also an important issue in the European elections. Also on the question of mandates, the law says clearly, the sum of valid votes cast for the advancing political parties or coalitions advancing to the next census is divided by the number of mandates according to § 86 par. 1 magnified by number one. The figure that has been distributed by this division, rounded to the nearest whole number, is the country's election number. " (NOVEASPI 2019) With a low turnout in the elections, a candidate from a political party or coalition with a small number of votes can relatively easily get into Parliament. "The total number of valid votes received by a political party or coalition shall be divided by the national election number and the political party or coalition shall be as many seats as the national election number contained in the total valid votes obtained by that political party or coalition." (NOVEASPI 2019)

2 Methodology

The submitted work entitled Euro Elections and Election Campaign consist of four parts. The first one deals with the competencies of the European Parliament as well as with the brief anchoring of elections in the Act of the Slovak Republic. In the second chapter, we will describe the methodology of work, determine the goal of the research as well as the methods used. In the third chapter of this paper, we examine the election campaign and analyze the results of the 2014 European Parliament elections.

The main aim of this article is to describe the competences and legislation for the European Parliament elections. The partial objective is to describe the election campaign itself into the EP elections. In the paper are used methods of description and content analysis of the text. In this article, we have identified one research question:

VO 1. Did the 2019 European Parliament elections have any major political theme?

The supposed answer to the research question is that the elections to the European Parliament did not have any fundamental theme that acted as a central theme. We will examine this assumption based on election campaigns of individual political parties or coalitions. At the beginning of the work, we briefly envisaged the competences of Members and the next step would be to analyze the political campaign. We will only analyze a political campaign for selected relevant political parties. By analysing the election campaign, we will have an overview of topics that often resonate and will be able to answer the research question more effectively. For a better understanding of the use of marketing in the election campaign and its effects, we look at the results of the 2014 elections and compare them to those of 2019. In 2014, marketing was not used to the extent and scale as it is now. Especially when it comes to online marketing. For this reason, our research material will be focused on the Facebook social network and videos on Youtube. Election campaigns are moving into the online world and therefore analyzing leaflets or billboards is no longer meaningful.

3   Election 2014

3.1 Campaign

The lack of interesting topics for the general public may also be a reason for the low election turnout. Both the European Union and Parliament play an important role in shaping policy. However, the topics that are part of the election campaign are often unknown to ordinary people. ,,The mass media play a notable role in society – they report essential information about the world, culture, politics as well as presenting the image of socialisation."(Lincényi, 2017) Elections to the European Parliament are discussed in the media in each Member State. The media try to impress in the most interesting way possible. Candidates try to make people feel important, but the 2014 election campaign was boring in the spirit of boring topics for the average citizen. Fighting bureaucratization or choosing less evil. These were the topics that most likely resonated in the election campaign. The most active candidate was Richard Sulík, who was still on social networks and meetings at that time. The Smer-SD political party had a campaign in the classic format of meetings in regional and some district towns. Nevertheless, the party Smer-SD managed to win the EU parliament election in Slovakia.

3.1.1 The course of the elections

The elections to the European Parliament in 2014 took place after intense and relatively challenging Presidential elections. The presidential elections were held in the spirit of constant accusations, which resulted in the loss of the former Prime Minister of the Slovak Republic, Robert Fico. The citizens of the Slovak Republic were tired of politics, which could reflect in their participation in the elections to the European Parliament. (Spáč, 2014) In 2013, a communication campaign was launched in Slovakia with the motto "This time it's different." It was about encouraging citizens to exercise their right to vote.

The then governing party SMER-SD chose a political campaign aimed at presenting its candidates. It was in the spirit of "We are choosing a successful Slovakia in Europe." The priority was to strengthen the social model, protect the environment and the territorial integrity of Slovakia. Candidates also promised the security of citizens, stopping illegal migration or reducing the risk of terrorism in the European Union. The Christian Democratic Movement pursued a program called "A Strong Family - A Better Europe", in which the main goal was to strengthen the family and raise living standards. The SDKÚ-DS party launched its campaign with the idea "More democracy, less bureaucracy." The program was aimed at supporting individual activities, better services and lower prices. OĽaNO has been profiled since the beginning of the campaign as an independent group of candidates, the aim of which was to protect national interests and change electoral rules so that independent candidates could also run. The coalition of NOVA, KDS and OKS had the electoral slogan "Europe must have reason and heart." In the program, they wanted to increase access to information in the form of the European Info Act. The SaS program dealt with European policy and was in the spirit of "All for Brussels, we for you." The party also proclaimed the importance of reform in the European Union. (Facebook, 2020)

The political campaign had several serious and important themes, but each side sought to promote its policy style. The campaign did not have one central topic that would be a priority.

3.2 Results

Based on recalculation of mandates, 13 seats in the European Parliament belonged to the Slovak Republic. The turnout was very low, only 13.05%. Based on the turnout of election, the following candidates received the mandate of MEP: Maroš Šefčovič (SMER-SD), Monika Beňová (SMER-SD), Boris Zala (SMER-SD), Vladimír Maňka (SMER-SD), Anna Záborská (KDH), Miroslav Mikolášik (KDH) Ivan Štefanec (SDKU), Eduard Kukan (SDKU), Branislav Skripek (OLaNO), József Nagy (Most-Híd), Richard Sulik (SaS), Pal Csaky (SMK) and Jana Zitnanska (Nova, KDS, OKS). " (Statistics, 2020)

So the election was won by 8 political parties and we have shown the results in the table for a better overview.

Political party	Number of valid votes	Percentage of valid votes in%	Number of mandates
SMER – sociálna demokracia	135 089	24,09	4
Kresťanskodemo-kratické hnutie	74 108	13,21	2
Slovenská demokratická a kresťanská únia – Demokratická strana	43 467	7,75	2

OBYČAJNÍ ĽUDIA a nezávislé osobnosti	41 829	7,46	1
NOVA, Konzervatívni demokrati Slovenska, Občianska konzervatívna stra-na	38 316	6,83	1
Sloboda a Solidarita	37 376	6,66	1
Strana maďarskej komunity – Magyar Közösség Pártja	36 629	6,53	1
MOST – HÍD	32 708	5,83	1

Source: Statistics

The table shows that the winner of the elections was the Smer-SD party with four MEPs. It is immediately followed by the KDH party, which had two MEPs, and SDKU-DS is also in third place with two MEPs. Other political parties or coalitions occupied the one mandate.

4 Election 2019

4.1 Campaign

As part of the political campaign for EP 2019, we can meet with various topics. Some political parties demand the reform of the European Union, others want to be the voice of Slovaks in the European Forum. The ĽSNS political party, which was a priori against the Slovak Republic's membership in the European Union, is now running and holding the leading positions. It states that the Union needs to be reformed in order to preserve the sovereignty of individual EU member states. The coalition of Progressive Slovakia and the SPOLU Civic Democracy Party is running as progressive-minded candidates. They try to arouse people's interest in European politics and bring it closer to young people. Although the Smer-SD party was a leader in surveys, the campaign was aimed mainly at the older generations and does not create activities at all to involve young people in public affairs. The political campaign, however, does not have a significant theme that would resonate in society. Slovak influencers, who went to schools and talked about the importance of the European Union, also tried to help. However, the anti-system in the form of Kotleba's party was expected to have a higher chances in these elections. Kotleba's party was also indirectly or directly supported by several alternative media subjects using hoaxes, disinformations or propaganda. "The tactics of such disinformation campaigns consist of questioning the mainstream media, arousing distrust in institutions, principles and representatives of democracy. Propaganda practices were used, especially lies, half-truths." (Laczko, 2019:141)

4.1.1 The course of the elections

The course of the elections to the European Parliament was again in the background of the Presidential Elections in the Slovak Republic. In the second round competed candidates Zuzana Čaputová as an independent candidate with the support of almost the entire opposition and Maroš Šefčovič as a candidate with the help of the Smer-SD party. The independent candidate Zuzana Čaputová won the election. The scenario in the 2014 elections was repeated, so all attention was focused on defeating the Smer - SD party. The elections to the European Parliament had the motto "The time has come, to choose your future." The peculiarity of these elections was the style of promotion. Influencers, celebrities and, finally, politicians themselves were involved in these elections. Thanks to social networks, citizens were given information about the functioning of Members of the European Parliament. In this way, they could better understand the importance of elections. (Europarl.eu, 2019)

The coalition of Progressive Slovakia / SPOLU- civic democracy parties, had the main electoral slogan "Truly European Slovakia, change is coming." They tried to build on the electoral success in the Presidential Elections, where Zuzana Čaputová, President of the Slovak Republic, belonged to their political party. She managed to win the election, so they came up with new faces and progressive politics in elections with modern themes. They wanted to strengthen a common Europe through European healthcare, European schools, European services and food. With its participation in the European Parliament, the Smer-SD party wanted "Confident

Slovakia in Europe." In the program, they wanted to balance social differences so that Slovaks would not be cheap labour for Western Europe. They also wanted to strengthen a sense of security associated with the influx of illegal migration and the issue of dual food quality. The Kotleba's People's Party Our Slovakia had an electoral slogan "For the interests of Slovakia, against the nonsense from Brussels." In the campaign, they focused on the negatives of European policy, presenting the demise of the European Community. According to them, "Politicians in the European Parliament have betrayed us and are flooding Europe with millions of immigrants. "The Christian Democratic movement ran with the slogan" For a strong Slovakia. " The program included support for European integration, the fight for moral issues and assistance for young people. The Freedom and Solidarity party had the slogan "Choose common sense." The program included the effective use of Euro funds, oversight of the independence of the prosecutor's office and eco-transport. The OĽaNO movement went to the polls with the slogan "Let's save our European house." Their goal was for the European Union to unite and stay together. (Facebook, 2020)

Based on the analysis of the election campaign, we can conclude that the political parties raised essential issues that were relevant at the time. The main topic of the European elections was absent, and instead, each party focused on its vision of the European Parliament.

4.2 Results

„Despite active education for citizenship and democratic values in the Slovak Republic, hate speech is growing in society" (Lincényi, 2019:10) Society feels cheated and so they resort to choosing more radical parties. For this reason, the issue of education is important. "Political literacy applies to all citizens who have the right to vote and to stand as a candidate. These citizens should therefore understand the system in which they live. " (Čársky, Veselská, 2020:43) The media and celebrities have raised awareness against extremism. On the basis of the results we can conclude that the surveys differed from the real figures from the results of citizens' decisions. The turnout was higher than in the previous elections and climbed to 22.74%. It should be noted, however, that the participation of Slovaks in the elections was among the lowest in the European Union. The winner of the election was the coalition of Progressive Slovakia and SPOLU with 20.11%. The third party was the LSNS, which gained 12.07% in the elections. KDH, SaS and OĽaNO were also successful in the elections.

Results of political parties on the European Parliament elections.

Political party	Number of valid votes	Percentage of valid votes in%	Number of mandates
Progresívne Slovensko/ SPOLU- občianska demokracia	198 255	20,11	4
SMER – sociálna demokracia	154 996	15,72	3
Ľudová strana naše Slovensko	118 995	12,07	2
Kresťanskodemo-kratické hnutie	95 588	9,69	2
Sloboda a Solidarita	94 839	9,62	2
OBYČAJNÍ ĽUDIA a nezávislé osobnosti	51 834	5,25	1

Source: Statistics

5 Conclusion

In this paper we analysed the election campaign as well as the results of the European Parliament elections. In the first part, we described the basic tasks of the European Parliament and also recalled the basic legislative anchors in the European Parliament elections. In the second chapter we discussed the methodology of work. We set a goal, then a research question. We created a hypothesis from the research question and explained what methods we will work with. At last, we have identified a research file and research material. In the next chapter we dealt with the 2014 European Parliament elections. Finally, we went to the election results and based on the table we presented the results. In the last chapter we dealt with the election campaign and the results of the 2019 elections.

The main aim of this work was to describe the competences and legislation for the elections to the European Parliament. The partial objective was to bring the election campaign itself into the EP elections. In this paper, we identified one research question to which we sought an answer.

VO 1. Did the 2019 European Parliament elections have any major political theme?

The supposed answer to the research question was that the elections to the European Parliament have no fundamental theme to act as a core topic. Based on the analysis, we found that the elections have many topics presented by political leaders. However, the main topic was absent from the topics presented, which are uninteresting to ordinary people and therefore we had a low turnout again.

Elections to the European Parliament may not seem as watched as presidential elections in the United States, where the world is watching the results of elections that may have a global impact on world politics. The results in the USA have significant consequences for the US economic policy and thus for the world economy. (Kucharčík, Janas, 2016) However, elections to the European Parliament also watch people around the world, as they are deciding the future and direction of the European Union.

At the beginning of this work, we recalled the importance of the European Union. This idea needs to be presented not only at the time of the election campaign, but throughout the whole parliamentary term. There is low public awareness and this results in a low turnout. The topics seem to be distant from the ordinary citizen. Similar conclusions are confirmed by more detailed studies focused on the research of European citizenship and identity in the Czech and Slovak Republics from 2018).

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