



International Foundation
for Electoral Systems

Elections in the Czech Republic

2021 Legislative Elections

Frequently Asked Questions

Europe and Eurasia

International Foundation for Electoral Systems

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Frequently Asked Questions

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When is Election Day?

Legislative elections in the Czech Republic will be held between 2:00 p.m. and 10:00 p.m. on October 8, 2021 and between 8:00 a.m. and 2:00 p.m. on October 9.¹ Voting will take place at approximately 14,800 polling stations. Eighty designated polling stations will be accessible for voting by vehicle, a mitigation measure put in place due to the COVID-19 pandemic.²

Why are these elections important?

Legislative, or Chamber of Deputies, elections are considered the country's most important and are the most-watched. With their votes, citizens of the Czech Republic will decide not only on their deputies, but also on the direction of the country for the coming four years. The composition of the Chamber of Deputies will be crucial for the formation of a new government by either a single party or a coalition. By casting their votes, voters will also indirectly decide who should become the prime minister.³

The members of the Chamber of Deputies of the Parliament of the Czech Republic are currently drawn from nine parties. In the current Parliament, the majority of seats are held by YES 2011 (ANO 2011) with 78, followed by Civic Democratic Parties with 23, Czech Pirate Party with 22, and Freedom and Direct Democracy with 19. Other parties in the Parliament are the Czech Social Democratic Party, Communist Party of Bohemia and Moravia, Christian and Democratic Union—Czechoslovak People's Party, Conservative Party, and the party Starostove and Nezávisly ("mayors and independents"). Six deputies have left their parties since the last parliamentary elections and now form a separate parliamentary group.⁴

It remains to be seen whether ANO 2011 will be able to retain its leading place and the current prime minister, Andrej Babis, will be able to build a government again, having been criticized for the government's response to the COVID-19 pandemic and accused of wrongdoing related to the misuse of European Union subsidies.⁵

Who are citizens voting for on Election Day?

Czech citizens will vote for representatives to fill 200 seats in the Chamber of Deputies of the Parliament of the Czech Republic. This year, as of September 22, voters will choose from 22 political parties or coalitions and 5,253 candidates.⁶

¹ Website of the Ministry of Interior of the Czech Republic – General Information.

² [CT24 – Ceska Televize](#)

³ [iRozhlas.cz - Guide to the 2021 Parliamentary Elections](#)

⁴ Chamber of Deputies, Parliament of the Czech Republic—Parliamentary Groups.

⁵ [Seznam Zpravy – Capi Hnizdo Prehledne](#)

⁶ Volby.cz.

What is the electoral system?

The Parliament of the Czech Republic consists of the Chamber of Deputies (lower house) and the Senate (upper house). Members are elected based on universal, equal and direct suffrage by secret ballot. The Chamber of Deputies has 200 deputies who are elected for a four-year term by a proportional system. Elections to the Chamber of Deputies are always held over two days in all 14,800 electoral areas (“volební okrsek”). Both political parties and movements can run. In February 2021, the Constitutional Court abolished the previous method of allocating seats, which it deemed unfair to small parties and favoring candidates with larger followings and resources.⁷

What is the legal framework for conducting the elections?

The new election law, approved and signed by the president on May 4, 2021, put new rules in effect for this election cycle. The law introduced a new election clause that sets out the percentage of votes that a party or coalition of parties or movements must receive in order to be entitled to representation in the Chamber of Deputies. The limit is set at 5 percent for a single party or movement, 8 percent (formerly 10 percent) for two-member coalitions and 11 percent (formerly 15 percent) for multi-member coalitions. Parties, movements and coalitions that do not reach the given percentage will not receive a mandate in the Chamber of Deputies. Voters will choose deputies in 14 regions.⁸

Who is eligible to run as a candidate?

Every citizen of the Czech Republic who is 21 years old has the right to run for election to the Chamber of Deputies.⁹ Candidate lists for elections to the Chamber of Deputies may be submitted by political parties and political movements that are registered with the Ministry of the Interior and whose activities have not been suspended.¹⁰

Are there reserved seats for women? What is the gender balance within the candidate list?

There are no reserved seats for women. In the 2021 elections, female candidates exceed 30 percent for the first time, reaching 31.7 percent, or 1,664 nominees. In 2017, only 28.6 percent

⁷ [Seznam Zpravy - Elections to the Chamber of Deputies](#)

⁸ [Seznam Zpravy - Elections to the Chamber of Deputies](#)

⁹ [Seznam Zpravy - Elections to the Chamber of Deputies](#)

¹⁰ The Ministry of Interior of the Czech Republic — Elections to the Chamber of Deputies, Basic information for candidates.

(2,155) of candidates were women. The nominal number of women was higher in 2017 due to the higher number of candidates overall.¹¹

What are the campaign expenditure and donation limits?

According to the electoral law, campaign expenditures for elections to the Chamber of Deputies cannot exceed 90 million Czech Koruna (CZK), (approximately USD 140,000), including VAT.¹² While there are no specific donation limits to election campaigns, donations from both natural and legal persons to political parties is capped at 3 million CZK (approximately USD 4.15 million) in one calendar year.¹³

What is the election management body? What are its powers?

The State Electoral Commission (SEC) of the Czech Republic is a permanent electoral body within the Ministry of the Interior. The institution is composed of nine permanent and nine alternate members, led by a chairperson. SEC members are appointed by the government from a pool of civil servants across a range of ministries and government offices.¹⁴

The SEC administers elections for the Parliament of the Czech Republic. Among other duties, it is responsible for the preparation, organization and conduct of elections; prepares results records for the Chamber of Deputies; and announces and publishes results.

At the local level, district election commissions (DECs) oversee the administration of elections; ensure that voting at polling stations is in accordance with the law; and oversee the counting of votes and tabulation procedures in polling stations. DECs are also in charge of submitting election results documentation to the relevant municipal offices.¹⁵

How is the election management body protecting the elections and voters from COVID-19?

¹¹ iRozhlas.cz — Guide to the 2021 Parliamentary Elections.

¹² Act No. 247/1995 Sb. Act on Elections to the Parliament of the Czech Republic and on Amendments to Certain Other Acts (paragraph 16c).

¹³ [Transparency International Czech Republic – Political Parties and Political Campaign Rules in the Czech Republic](#). (page 16)

¹⁴ The Ministry of Interior of the Czech Republic — State Election Commission.

¹⁵ Act No. 247/1995 Sb. Act on Elections to the Parliament of the Czech Republic and on Amendments to Certain Other Acts (paragraph 14).

The State Electoral Commission issued the following basic guidelines for voters casting ballots in person:

- A face covering for the nose and mouth is required for the duration of the voter's time spent at the polling station, except when required for identification purposes;
- Voters must use hand disinfectants provided in polling stations;
- People entering polling stations must follow social distancing protocols as instructed by polling station workers;
- Voters are encouraged to use their own marking devices (pens) to mark ballots, although implements will also be provided by the district election commissions and disinfected frequently; and
- Voters must follow general instructions from the district election commissions.¹⁶

The government of the Czech Republic has introduced voting methods for people in quarantine or isolation. People will be able to cast their votes from cars at a polling station through so-called drive-in voting. This option will be available in each district on October 6, from 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. In addition to an identity card, passport, or voter ID, voters must present proof of the ordered quarantine. Voters need to wear respirators and should not leave their cars. Regional authorities published the locations of drive-in polling stations on September 23.¹⁷

Upon prior notification of the regional office, voters may also use a portable ballot box from October 8 at 8:00 a.m. to October 9 at 2:00 p.m. Voting by the portable ballot box needs to be prearranged with the municipal office, in the place of permanent residence by Thursday, October 7, by 8:00 p.m.¹⁸

Voters who are currently in retirement homes, which are closed to the public as per the government's COVID-19 measures, will be able to vote in the retirement homes from October 7 at 8:00 a.m. through October 8 at 6:00 p.m.¹⁹

Who can vote in these elections, and how many registered voters are there?

¹⁶ Hygienic and anti-epidemic measures in the organization of elections. Rules for municipal authorities and district election commissions.

¹⁷ iRozhlas.cz—Guide to the 2021 Parliamentary Elections.

¹⁸ [CT24 – Ceska Televize](#)

¹⁹ iRozhlas.cz—Guide to the 2021 Parliamentary Elections.

Every citizen of the Czech Republic over the age of 18 whose freedom is not restricted for reasons of health protection may participate in the legislative elections.²⁰

During the last parliamentary elections in the Czech Republic in 2017, 8.4 million voters were registered, compared to 8.6 million voters for this year's elections.²¹ Detailed disaggregation of voter data will be provided after elections. Of the 8.6 million voters, women account for 51 percent (4.4 million) and men for 49 percent (4.2 million); approximately 380,000 are first-time voters.²²

Is out-of-country voting allowed?

Out-of-country voting is allowed in parliamentary elections, though only at embassies. Out-of-country voters must register for a special voter list maintained by embassies or consulates of the Czech Republic. Czech citizens living abroad were required to register by August 29.²³

Who can observe during Election Day? How can they be accredited?

On Election Day, international observers can observe elections in the Czech Republic. International observers are usually organized as a mission and deployed through the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR).²⁴

The Permanent Representative of the Czech Republic to the OSCE invited the OSCE/ODIHR and the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly to observe the parliamentary elections.²⁵ The OSCE election monitoring mission will have four experts. Two will focus on politics and elections and two on equality and freedom of expression.²⁶

For domestic observation, one member and one alternate to the Constituency Election Commission (CEC) are delegated. The delegation of a member of the CEC is facilitated by the

²⁰ Chamber of Deputies, Parliament of the Czech Republic.

²¹ [Mp Distribuce - Dividers for elections to Chamber of Deputies, Parliament of the Czech Republic 2021](#)

²² Interlocutor interview with election expert.

²³ iRozhlas.cz—Guide to the 2021 Parliamentary Elections.

²⁴ Permanent Mission of the Czech Republic to the United Nations, OSCE and other international organizations in Vienna, Austria.

²⁵ OSCE/ODIHR – Czech Republic Parliamentary Elections, 8-9 October 2021

²⁶ [CT24 – Ceska Televize - The fairness of the Czech elections will be monitored by four international experts](#)

political party, political movement or coalition whose list of candidates for election to the Chamber of Deputies has been registered in each constituency.²⁷

Where will votes be counted and tabulated?

As soon as each polling station closes, the authorized municipal office begins to count the votes. Only employees of the Czech Statistical Office, the municipality and the regional office, as well as members of the State Electoral Commission, may be present.²⁸

When will official results be announced?

The preliminary results will be announced during the evening of October 9. The official results will be published on the website of the Czech Statistical Office on the morning of October 10.

How will election disputes be adjudicated?

The Law on Elections to the Parliament stipulates that a petitioner may file a motion for annulment if the petitioner believes the provisions of the Law on Elections have been violated in a way that could have affected the overall election results. According to the explanatory memorandum, this may include violations that could have disrupted the proper conduct of elections and thus the results of the elections or voting. The Supreme Administrative Court has jurisdiction over the proceedings and shall issue a resolution within 20 days after the motion reaches the court.²⁹

Complaints can be submitted by a political party, a political movement or a coalition whose list of candidates has been registered in a constituency, as well as any citizen registered on the permanent list of voters. The deadline for submitting a complaint is 10 days after the official election results have been announced.³⁰

²⁷ Act No. 247/1995 Sb. Act on Elections to the Parliament of the Czech Republic and on Amendments to Certain Other Acts (paragraph 14e (3)).

²⁸ Act No. 247/1995 Sb. Act on Elections to the Parliament of the Czech Republic and on Amendments to Certain Other Acts (paragraph 14a).

²⁹ Chamber of Deputies, Parliament of the Czech Republic—Organization and course of elections to the Chamber of Deputies.

³⁰ The Ministry of Interior of the Czech Republic—Judicial protection after the elections (point 3).

Resources

- [Act No. 247/1995 Sb. Act on Elections to the Parliament of the Czech Republic and on Amendments to Certain Other Acts](#)
- [Ministry of the Interior of the Czech Republic](#)
- [The Ministry of Interior of the Czech Republic – State Election Commission](#)
- [Chamber of Deputies, Parliament of the Czech Republic – Parliamentary Groups](#)
- [Chamber of Deputies, Parliament of the Czech Republic – Organization and course of elections to the Chamber of Deputies](#)
- [The Ministry of Interior of the Czech Republic – Judicial protection after the elections](#)
- [Hygienic and anti-epidemic measures in the organization of elections. Rules for municipal authorities and district election commissions](#)
- [OSCE/ODIHR – Czech Republic Parliamentary Elections, 8-9 October 2021](#)
- [iRozhlas.cz – Guide to the 2021 Parliamentary Elections](#)

About IFES in the Czech Republic

The International Foundation for Electoral Systems (IFES) opened the Regional Europe Office (REO) in Prague, Czech Republic, in 2014. Through the “Regional Election Administration and Political Process Strengthening” (REAPPS) program, IFES REO engages electoral stakeholders across Central and Eastern Europe, Eurasia and the Balkans working with electoral issues broadly defined for professional development events featuring innovative approaches, experience sharing, evidence-based solutions and peer-to-peer learning. Under REAPPS, IFES REO specializes in equipping electoral stakeholders to respond to persistent and emerging challenges to democratic resilience by focusing on topics such as countering malign foreign influence, disinformation, cybersecurity, inclusion, political finance, crisis management in election administration and electoral jurisprudence.

Disclosure

These FAQs reflect decisions made by the Czech election authorities as of October 6, 2021, to the best of our knowledge. This document does not represent any IFES policy or technical recommendations.

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