

GABE HARRACH – KRISZTIÁN RÁKÓCZI  
THE 2016 PARLIAMENTARY ELECTIONS IN  
SLOVAKIA –  
HUNGARIAN REPRESENTATION  
IN THE POLITICAL SCENE

**Abstract:** The parliamentary elections held in March 2016 led to the victory of Robert Fico's SMER party and the defeat of the traditional right-wing parties. This earthquake-like electoral change altered the stable but otherwise diverse party scene in Slovakia. Besides addressing the general result of the elections, the paper also tries to explore the party preferences of ethnic Hungarian voters. It examines the share of the votes for the MKP, which is an ethnic Hungarian party and the Most-Híd ('Bridge' in English), which is a liberal interethnic formation.

On 5 March 2016, parliamentary elections – the seventh since Slovakia became independent – were held during which the citizens of Slovakia could vote for 23 party lists. Before the elections the main question was not whether the Smer-SD (Direction – Social Democracy) party – which had a comfortable majority between 2012 and 2016 and governed the country alone – and its chairman, Prime Minister Robert Fico would form a government again, but which parties would be involved in this process. Opinion polls had been forecasting a gradually decreasing result for the Smer-SD in the months before the elections, but predicted that the party would still win at least 30% of the votes. On the basis of these forecasts, it seemed likely that the Smer-SD would need the support of only one other party in order to form Fico's third government. However, exit polls on election night showed that this prognosis would not come true. In the end, eight party lists managed to reach the 5% parliamentary threshold and won seats in the parliament, causing earthquake-like changes in the already diverse party scene in Slovakia. Among the parties, 13 did not even obtain 1% of the votes, and two parties – the Christian Democratic Movement (Kresťanskodemokratické hnutie – KDH) and the Party of the Hungarian Community (Magyar Közösség Pártja – MKP) – received 250,000 votes altogether, remaining below the 5% threshold and reflecting the weak performance of traditional parties.

During parliamentary elections, the territory of Slovakia is considered a single electoral district. The election of the 150-member legislation takes place in a proportional system, in one electoral round. In order to win seats, parties have to obtain at least 5% of the total

number of valid votes. In the case of coalitions consisting of two or three parties, this threshold is 7%, while coalitions consisting of four or five parties have to reach at least 10%. The validity of parliamentary elections does not depend on the ratio of people taking part in the voting. Voters can cast their votes for open party lists and they can influence the order of candidates on the lists through priority, preferential votes. A voter can cast not more than four preferential votes, circling the number of the preferred MP candidates. Candidates who receive at least 3% of the total number of votes cast for the respective party lists as preferential votes enjoy certain advantages during the distribution of the seats.

Out of the 4.4 million registered constituents, 2,648,184 citizens took part in the election, thus, the voter turnout was 59.8%. The 2016 turnout was similar to that of the past two elections; it was only slightly higher than in 2010 (58.8%) and 2012 (59.1%). According to administrative units, voter turnout was the highest in the constituency of Bratislava and Žilina (66.4% and 64.8% respectively), while the lowest turnout was measured in the district of Košice (52.8%). At the level of districts, the Turdos district of the Žilina constituency witnessed a higher turnout (70.4%), followed by the Senec district of the Bratislava constituency (69%) and three districts of the capital, Bratislava I, III and IV. A tendency observed in previous elections continued in 2016: voters' turnout in territories inhabited by Hungarians remained far below the national average. For example, in 2006 and 2010, the Dunajská Streda district had the highest turnout at the national level (62,62% and 67,57% respectively), and voters' activity was also higher than the national average in 2012. In 2016, this ratio decreased to 56.5%. Hungarian voters' increasing disinterest in politics is also reflected in the low turnout in the other Hungarian-majority district, the district of Komárno, where it was extremely low; only 49% of Hungarians cast a vote. In addition to the Komárno district, further three districts – which also have a considerable Hungarian population – lag behind, even at the national level. The lowest voter turnout in the country was observed in the Mihalovce district (43.6%), followed by the Revúca district (46.9%) and the Trebišov district (48.8%).

## **The results of majority parties**

The winner of the elections was the Smer-SD which had governed the country alone for four years. However, the 737,000 votes it received in 2016 means a 10-year low-point in the history of the party. In 2012, the Smer achieved a historic success, obtaining more than 1.1 million votes, and Robert Fico could form Slovakia's first one party-government after the change of regime. The result the Smer had had four years ago (44.4%) decreased to 28.3% in 2016, and instead of the earlier 83 MPs, the party acquired only 49 parliamentary

seats. This strong drop caused great surprise because Fico had been continuing an intensive campaign in the last two years before the elections. Fico announced three social packages worth 1 billion Euro. His election program of 36 points included items that were not irregular and are usually part of a government's general management (e.g. the reducing of unemployment, the raising of minimum wages, the renovation of roads), however, it also contained points which obviously aimed at gaining votes (e.g. the reduction of gas price, free railway travel opportunities for pensioners and students). Nevertheless, the paternalistic politics – the aim of which was to distract attention from corruption issues – did not bring the expected success. The Smer-SD was not able to rule the public discourse before the elections, and in the last phase of the campaign the political agenda was dominated by the demonstration waves of the employees of the health and education sectors, who are struggling with more and more urgent problems.

Opinion polls forecast approximately 5% for the Freedom and Solidarity (Sloboda a Solidarita – SaS) party which achieved much better results than expected, growing into the leading force of right-wing parties. Since its establishment, the SaS led by MEP Richard Sulík was one of the strongest critics of the Smer and Robert Fico, and its 2016 success was also the result of this attitude. The SaS defined itself as a liberal party, and – since the times of its foundation – liberalism has been most apparently present in its economic policy. In recent years, the fight for gay marriage and the encouragement of the decriminalization of soft drug consumption became less emphatic in the program of the SaS, which – during the election campaign - became better known for its strong xenophobia, surpassing even far-right parties. In the 2016 elections, the SaS received 315,558 votes (12.1%), therefore, it doubled the number of votes it had had in 2012, having increased the number of its MPs from 11 to 21. The SaS achieved the best results in districts which were earlier considered the main bastions of the Slovak Democratic and Christian Union – Democratic Party (Slovenská demokratická a kresťanská únia - Demokratická strana – SDKÚ-DS). The SDKÚ-DS – the onetime successful party that that governed the country with Mikuláš Dzurinda in the Prime Minister's office between 1998 and 2006 – collapsed by the 2012 elections due to internal conflicts and became irrelevant, and in 2016 obtained only 0.3% of the votes.

Opinion polls forecast about 5% for the party of Ordinary People and Independent Personalities (Obyčajní Ľudia a nezávislé osobnosti – OĽaNO) but the results it achieved in the elections surpassed preliminary expectations: with 287,611 votes, the OĽaNO won 11%, receiving 19 seats in the parliament. The formation is led by Igor Matovič who – together with three of his partners – participated in the 2010 elections on the list of the SaS, occupying its 147-150 positions, but due to preferential votes he managed to make it to the parliament. In 2012, Matovič and his party colleagues participated in the

elections on their own list and – despite the fact that they had the lowest positions on the list – managed to win seats in the parliament. In 2016 the situation was almost the same. The OĽaNO, however, cannot be considered a traditional party, either based on its structure, or regarding its political culture. It is much more a protest party. The OĽaNO defines itself as a center-right, conservative party. It does not have members, it is rather an independent group of experts and the representatives of the civil sector which organized different performances in the parliament in order to draw attention to corruption issues connected to the Smer. In the 2016 elections, the list of the OĽaNO also included members of the New Majority (Nová väčšina, NOVA) led by Daniel Lipšic. Lipšic left the faction of the KDH in 2012, three months after the parliamentary elections, and established his own party, hoping that he would be able to address voters who lost their confidence in right-wing parties. One of the main sources of Lipšic's courage was that in the 2012 elections, he managed to advance from the third position on the list to the first one, due to preferential votes, and, thus became the most popular politician of the party. His plan was to build the leading party of the Right, which would grow into a force able to defeat the Smer-government in 2016. He established his party under the name NOVA, but after it became clear from surveys that the party was far from being in majority, he entered into cooperation with Igor Matovič and agreed in 2015 to cooperate and participate in the 2016 elections as a coalition.

In accordance with the forecasts, the Slovak National Party (Slovenská národná strana – SNS) returned to the parliament after a four-year break with 15 MPs. It doubled the number of votes it had in 2012, receiving 225,386 votes (8.6%). Since 2012, the image of the SNS has changed considerably: after the unsuccessful elections in 2012, the chairman of the party Ján Slota did not run again for the presidential post. He became an honorary president and half a year later he was excluded from the SNS on suspicion of misappropriation of party funds. Slota was succeeded by Andrej Danko, who addressed voters in a completely new manner: in many of his statements he raised his voice against xenophobia and racism.<sup>1</sup> During Danko's rule, the nationalist SNS started to turn into a national-conservative party, however, the building of the nation-state and the strengthening of Slovakian patriotism are still important points of the party's program. The so-called "Hungarian card" was used neither by the SNS, nor by any other Slovakian party during the 2016 election campaign. However, anti-Hungarian nationalism was less emphatic even in the 2012 election, compared to previous years. If this tendency continues, the Hungarian card will presumably disappear from Slovak public life.

---

1 After the parliamentary elections, Andrej Danko gave an interview to the Pozsony-based Hungarian daily newspaper *Új Szó* and apologized for his predecessor's statements. *Új Szó*, 8 April 2016.

The greatest surprise of the election night was the success of the far-right People's Party – Our Slovakia (Ľudová strana – Naše Slovensko – ĽSNS) led by Marian Kotleba. Opinion polls – presumably due to the high number of hidden voters – implied that this party would remain far below the 5% threshold, but, astonishingly, it received 210,000 votes (8%), winning 14 seats in the Slovak parliament. In 2012, the ĽSNS reached only 1.6%, five times less than in 2016. Kotleba and the racist, law-and-order politics he represents reached its first remarkable result in November 2013, when it managed to win the competition for the county chief's post in the Banská Bystrica district, collecting more than 71,000 votes. It was not only its strong xenophobic and anti-migrant rhetoric which helped the ĽSNS win, but the fact that traditional parties have long been unable to offer appropriate alternative solutions for the residents in areas which are in the worst economic situation. A further factor which contributed to Kotleba's success was that he could convince first-time voters. The exit poll made by the Focus for the Markíza commercial TV channel shows that 22.7% of citizens between the age of 18 and 21 cast their votes for the ĽSNS, therefore, this party was the most successful one in this age group.

Another surprise of the election was the unexpected success of the Smerodina (We are a family) party led by Boris Kollár, a wealthy businessman known from the world of celebrities. He established his party in November 2015, therefore, in less than four months he managed to build a force from nothing which won 6.6% of the votes (172,860 votes), ensuring 11 seats for the party in the parliament. Perhaps it is Kollár's success which shows best that in the 2016 parliamentary elections many people voted to express protest. Voters knew little about the party and its value system since during the election campaign Kollár used only two topics. One of them was criticizing the current party system, which is best illustrated by the party leader's motto: *"You can believe me. I am not a politician."* According to the Smerodina, traditional parties and their politicians *"lie, cheat and steal"* and are led by financial groups and oligarchs. The other main promise of the party was that it would defend the country from the "Muslim invasion."

The eighth party which managed to make it to the parliament was the #Siet' (Network). The party – founded in 2014 by a former member of the Christian Democratic Party, Radoslav Procházka – received 146,000 votes (5.6%). However, the result which brought ten seats for the #Siet' was a huge disappointment for the party which had been the new leader of right-wing parties after the 2014 presidential election. That year, Procházka took third place in the first round of the elections, obtaining 400,000 votes. In order to benefit from this success, he established the #Siet' with the hope to make it into the leading force of the fragmented right-wing parties, first of all, with formations having Christian Democratic roots. Procházka's aim was to offer an alternative for those who lost their faith in the KDH and the SDKÚ, but he also gained supporters from other parties. Opinion polls, for example, showed that the

establishment of the #Siet' brought a serious setback for Daniel Lipšic's party in November 2014: with the appearance of the #Siet', the number of the NOVA's supporters were reduced by half. Even the last surveys made public before the elections suggested that the #Siet' is the strongest rival of the Smer, therefore, it was a major surprise of the elections that Procházka's party barely passed the threshold. During the presidential election campaign, Procházka criticized the Smer and Robert Fico's practices of exercising power, but his criticism weakened later. Unlike Procházka, the politicians of the SaS and the OL'ANO sharply criticized the Smer and its prominent figures up to the end of the election campaign, therefore, most people who were unsatisfied with the Social Democrats chose one of these parties.

## The election results of the MKP and the Most-Híd

Similarly to elections held in 2010 and 2012, in the 2016 parliamentary elections two parties competed for the votes of Hungarians living in Slovakia: the Party of the Hungarian Community (MKP) which defines itself as a regional and ethnic party, and the interethnic Most-Híd party (both words mean "bridge", the first in Slovak, the last in Hungarian) which – since its establishment in 2009 – has been encouraging cooperation between Hungarians and Slovaks. The result of their competition was more or less the same as that of the previous two elections: the Most-Híd performed better than the MKP and preserved its representation in the parliament, while for the MKP it was the third unsuccessful attempt to win seats in the Slovak parliament. In December 2013, a new party appeared on the scene of Hungarian political parties in Slovakia: the Hungarian Christian Democratic Alliance (Magyar Kereszténydemokrata Szövetség – MKDSZ). Similarly to the 2014 European parliamentary and local elections, the MKDSZ remained a marginal party, receiving only 2,426 votes (0.1%).

The MKP looked forward to the parliamentary elections with moderate optimism. The reason of this optimism was that in every Slovakian election held after autumn 2013, the MKP performed better than the Most-Híd (in the autumn 2013 county municipality elections, in the May 2014 European Parliamentary elections, and in the autumn 2014 local elections). These elections showed that the regional embeddedness of the MKP is strong, stronger than that of its main rival party.

At the 8<sup>th</sup> congress of the Most-Híd – which was established in 2014 as the party of inter-ethnic cooperation – the party decided to define itself as a civic party and adopted its strategic election program entitled *Civic Vision 2016*. The congress also witnessed the election of new officials. Lucia Žitňanská was elected one of the party's vice-presidents (since 2006, Lucia Žitňanská had been an MP of the SDKÚ). In 2012, she was the third candidate on the list of

the SDKÚ, but – due to 103 preferential votes – she became the party’s most popular politician in the end. Since its establishment, the Most-Híd has been trying to address not only people with clear Hungarian identity, but also voters with Slovak-Hungarian mixed identity, as well as Slovaks with Hungarian ancestors, relatives or friends. Due to the presence and active participation of Žitňanská – who also comes from a Slovak-Hungarian mixed family – the Most-Híd’s opening towards Slovak voters became more perceivable.

The Most-Híd was the seventh party which managed to enter the Slovakian parliament, obtaining 6.5% of the votes. The party and its chairman Béla Bugár was disappointed by the results, since the leaders of the party had expected at least 10%.<sup>2</sup> Instead of the expected growth, the Most-Híd lost voters: in 2010, it had 205,000 voters, in 2010 this number decreased to 176,000, and in 2016 it further decreased to 170,000. This result brought 11 parliamentary seats for the party. Among the candidates who won mandates, seven MPs are Hungarians and 4 MPs are Slovaks. In addition to the Most-Híd’s MPs, additional Hungarians who won seat in the Slovak parliament include Katalin Cséfalvay who participated on the list of the #Siet’, and Gábor Grendel who was a candidate of the OĽaNO’s list, therefore, a total of nine Hungarians won mandates in 2016.

The Party of the Hungarian Community (MKP) set up its list in the spirit of cooperation and unity, opening its candidate positions to young people and civil activists. However, even this collaboration was not enough to pass the 5% threshold. The party received 4.04% which is equal to 105,495 votes. In the light of the results, it can be declared that the MKP’s electorate continues to be stable, but not large enough to pass the parliamentary threshold. Compared with the results of the election held four years ago, the party received 4,000 votes less in 2012.

Our first two tables present the most basic data, i.e., the number and proportion of votes cast for the two parties, according to electoral districts.<sup>3</sup> The remaining districts (54 districts) which are located north from the ethnic line of settlements near the border and have a less significant Hungarian population are considered – from an ethno-demographic aspect – a single category, the territory of dispersed Hungarian communities. Therefore, in the table below and in the following tables, the results of these territories are indicated as a single unit.

---

2 “Bugár: a cél a kétszámjegyű eredmény” [Bugár: Our goal is a two-digit result], *Új Szó*, 7 January 2017.

3 In certain tables of the study the total sum of districts may differ from the actual national data due to rounding.

	MKP								Most-Híd							
	Number of votes				% (of total valid votes)				Number of votes				% (of total valid votes)			
	2010	2012	2016	2016	2010	2012	2016	2016	2010	2012	2016	2016	2010	2012	2016	2016
<b>BRATISLAVA CONSTITUENCY</b>																
<b>Bratislav</b>	1,606	1,557	1,554		0.7	0.7	0.6		20,291	18,614	23,099		8.4	7.8	8.9	
<b>Senec district</b>	1,563	1,716	2,146		4.6	5.0	5.0		5,671	5,375	5,114		16.8	15.5	12.0	
<b>TRNAVA CONSTITUENCY</b>																
<b>Dunajská Stred district</b>	21,262	23,139	23,196		32.9	39.6	41.8		32,909	25,671	18,621		50.9	43.9	33.6	
<b>Galanta district</b>	6,621	6,947	8,183		14.2	15.3	17.8		13,730	12,089	8,800		29.4	26.6	19.2	
<b>NITRA CONSTITUENCY</b>																
<b>Komárno district</b>	17,817	18,694	16,108		34.6	41.8	38.9		17,531	15,412	11,860		23.8	22.4	18.0	
<b>Levice district</b>	7,618	6,911	7,019		13.7	13.3	13.4		19,409	13,947	11,558		37.7	31.2	27.9	
<b>Nitra district</b>	1,693	1,467	1,776		2.1	1.8	2.1		9,965	8,696	6,840		17.9	16.7	13.1	
<b>Nové Zámky district</b>	13,364	12,716	11,430		18.2	18.5	17.4		5,218	5,293	4,989		6.5	6.5	5.9	
<b>Šala district</b>	3,952	4,121	3,734		15.7	17.3	15.7		6,660	5,413	4,397		26.4	22.7	18.5	





The MKP managed to slightly increase the number of its voters in the districts of Senec, Dunajská Streda, Levice and Rožňava, while in the district of Galanta it gained 1,200 new voters. However, in the rest of the southern districts the MKP's popularity decreased. The most painful loss was observed in the district of Komárno where the party lost 2,600 voters compared to its 2012 results. On the whole, the MKP defeated the Most-Híd in seven districts. In 2012 this number was only five. Therefore, in 2016 the MKP received more votes than the Most-Híd in the district of Dunajská Streda, Komárno, Levice, Nové Zámky, Revúca, Rimavská Sobota, Veľký Krtíš and Trebišov.

Compared to the results reached four years ago, the Most-Híd performed worse in every districts inhabited by Hungarians. The strongest backsliding was measured in the district of Dunajská Streda: while in 2010 more than half of the local population voted for the Most-Híd (32,000 votes), this number in 2012 was only 26,000 and in 2016 it decreased to 18,600. A similar dramatic drop was observed in the district of Galanta and Nové Zámky. In the former, the 12,000 votes the party had in 2012 melted to 8,800 in 2016, while in the latter, the earlier 15,400 votes decreased to 12,000. The popularity of the Most-Híd also weakened in the district of Komárno (the party lost 2,500 votes) and Levice (1,500 lost votes). The success of the Most-Híd was in large part due to the fact that the number of Slovaks voting for the party grew significantly: in the capital, the party received 23,000 votes (4,300 more than last time), while in "northern" districts which are defined as non-Hungarian areas, the electorate of the party grew from 25,000 to 38,000. According to the results of the 2011 census, the number of Hungarians in Bratislava is only 14,000 (3.4%), while in Košice this number is only 6,000 (2.7%), therefore, it can be concluded that the votes the Most-Híd received in these towns came from people of Slovak ethnicity.

In the 16 "southern" districts the MKP received 101,910 votes, while the Most-Híd obtained 100,913. In the same districts, the Most-Híd had 151,000 votes in 2010 and 126,000 in 2012, therefore, it can be declared that over a period of six years, 50,000 people turned away from the interethnic party in regions where significant Hungarian communities live. The electorate of the MKP has hardly changed: it received 105,000 votes in the 16 Hungarian-populated districts in both previous elections. Data on territorial participation showed that the majority of Hungarian voters did not go to the polls and, on the basis of the above presented data, we can declare that only a small part of the Most-Híd's voters turned to the MKP. The MKP lacked only 30,000 votes to pass the 5% threshold. Voters who came over from the Most-Híd were enough only to reduce the losses which are the results of negative demographic processes and to substitute those former MKP-voters who – after 2012 – lost their confidence in the Hungarian ethnic party or did not take part in the elections. The majority of Hungarian voters who would have had to choose between the MKP and the Most-Híd stayed away from the ballot.

## Main territorial data from Southern Slovakia

In the next section we present the territorial distribution and changes of the votes cast for the MKP and the Most-Híd, comparing them with the results of the 2010-2016 period.

	MKP			Most-Híd		
	2010	2012	2016	2010	2012	2016
<b>BRATISLAVA CONSTITUENCY</b>						
Bratislava	1.5	1.4	1.5	9.9	10.6	13.6
Senec district	1.4	1.6	2.0	2.8	3.1	3.0
<b>TRNAVA CONSTITUENCY</b>						
Dunajská Stred district	19.4	21.1	22.0	16.0	14.6	11.0
Galanta district	6.0	6.3	7.8	6.7	6.9	5.2
<b>NITRA CONSTITUENCY</b>						
Komárno district	12.2	11.6	10.8	8.5	8.8	7.0
Levice district	16.3	17.1	15.3	9.4	7.9	6.8
Nitra district	6.9	6.3	6.7	4.8	4.9	4.0
Nové Zámky district	1.5	1.3	1.7	2.5	3.0	2.9
Šaľa district	3.6	3.8	3.5	3.2	3.1	2.6
<b>BANSKÁ BYSTRICA CONSTITUENCY</b>						
Lučenec district	3.5	3.1	2.9	2.5	2.7	2.1
Revúca district	3.3	2.9	2.8	1.5	1.5	1.3
Rimavská Sobota district	1.7	1.7	1.6	1.1	1.0	0.9
Veľký Krtíš district	6.3	6.4	6.2	3.4	3.7	3.3
<b>KOŠICE CONSTITUENCY</b>						
Košice	1.4	1.4	1.4	4.3	4.4	4.4
Košice-region district	3.2	3.2	3.2	3.9	2.9	2.7
Mihalovce district	2.4	2.2	2.2	1.7	1.7	1.6
Rožňava district	2.9	3.1	3.3	3.0	3.1	2.4
Trebišov district	5.7	4.9	4.7	2.6	2.8	2.7
Areas of dispersed Hungarian communities	0.6	0.5	0.5	12.1	13.6	22.5
<b>TOTAL</b>	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

*Table 2: Territorial distribution of the MKP and the Most-Híd voters (%)*

In 2010, people living in the western districts of the Hungarian-populated line of settlement constituted two-thirds of the MKP's electorate (without voters living in the region of the capital); their ratio grew to 70% by 2016. In contrast to this, the Most-Híd had a lower number of supporters in the concerned territory, and – in six years – their ratio decreased from 54% to 43%. The representation of voters living in the eastern part of the Hungarian-populated line of settlement shows a downward trend in both groups. However, proportions also differ here: in the case of the MKP, this share is 27-29%, while in the case of the Most-Híd it is 17-20%. The most striking differences can be observed in large towns and in the areas where Hungarians live sporadically. While the MKP received only 3% from the residents of large towns and 0.5% from the territories of dispersed Hungarian communities, these numbers in the case of the interethnic Most-Híd were 14-17% and 12-22% respectively, which shows an increasing volume.

On the whole, the MKP is stronger (and is continuously strengthening) in southwest districts, while the Most-Híd has a higher number of voters in the capital and areas of scattered Hungarian communities. However, it would be incorrect to declare that the MKP is the party of Hungarians living compactly, while the Most-Híd is that of Hungarians living in urbanized areas or in the majority-dominated environment. The data on the territorial distribution of voters – in accordance with the data presented in the tables above – clearly show that Hungarians living compactly form the main basis for both parties, even if their proportions are different.

After the examination of the geographical distribution of votes, it is important to have a look at temporal changes in the number of votes according to districts. (See Table 3.)

At the national level, the number of the MKP's voters decreased by 4% between 2010 and 2016, while that of the Most-Híd decreased by 17%. The electorate of the MKP in Bratislava, Košice and the western districts of the Hungarian-populated line of settlement is obviously more stable than in eastern districts, however, in the case of the two large towns and the agglomeration of the capital these groups are very small, even in relation to local ethnic circumstances. In the examined period, the electorate of the party expanded only in 5 districts, while in 11 districts the number of supporters dropped. The expanding districts – with one exception – are located in the westernmost part of the Hungarian-populated areas, near Bratislava. The most intensive growth was observed in the district of Senec (37%), while the strongest drop of votes (22%) was measured in the easternmost district, the district of Trebišov. In other districts the decrease was not as dramatic as here. Therefore, in districts where the MKP's popularity grew, changes were salient, while in the majority of districts – which can be characterized by the decrease of the electorate – erosion was more moderate. It is calculable that without the increased number of votes which came from the district of Senec, Galanta and Dunajská Streda, the MKP would not have been able to reach even the 4% 'psychological' threshold.

	Rate changes in the number of votes (2010=100)					
	MKP			Most-Híd		
	2010	2012	2016	2010	2012	2016
<b>BRATISLAVA CONSTITUENCY</b>						
Bratislava	100.0	96.9	96.8	100.0	91.7	113.8
Senec district	100.0	109.8	137.3	100.0	94.8	90.2
<b>TRNAVA CONSTITUENCY</b>						
Dunajská Stred district	100.0	108.8	109.1	100.0	78.0	56.6
Galanta district	100.0	104.9	123.6	100.0	88.0	64.1
<b>NITRA CONSTITUENCY</b>						
Komárno district	100.0	95.2	85.5	100.0	87.9	67.7
Levice district	100.0	104.9	90.4	100.0	71.9	59.5
Nitra district	100.0	90.7	92.1	100.0	87.3	68.6
Nové Zámky district	100.0	86.7	104.9	100.0	101.4	95.6
Šaľa district	100.0	104.3	94.5	100.0	81.3	66.0
<b>BANSKÁ BYSTRICA CONSTITUENCY</b>						
Lučenec district	100.0	88.6	79.8	100.0	92.1	68.7
Revúca district	100.0	89.4	82.7	100.0	85.9	70.5
Rimavská Sobota district	100.0	97.0	88.2	100.0	76.4	66.9
Veľký Krtíš district	100.0	101.4	94.1	100.0	91.5	79.0
<b>KOŠICE CONSTITUENCY</b>						
Košice	100.0	101.3	94.9	100.0	86.4	84.7
Košice-region district	100.0	98.1	96.1	100.0	63.6	57.4
Mihalovce district	100.0	91.2	85.7	100.0	85.6	80.4
Rožňava district	100.0	104.3	108.3	100.0	89.6	66.7
Trebišov district	100.0	86.1	78.5	100.0	92.5	84.9
Areas of dispersed Hungarian communities	100.0	78.8	87.6	100.0	96.1	153.1
<b>Total</b>	100.0	99.9	96.2	100.0	85.7	82.5

*Table 3: Changes of the MKP's and Most-Híd's votes by electoral district (2010=100)*

The Most-Híd could increase the number of its expected voters only in Bratislava and in the areas of dispersed Hungarian communities, while in certain southern districts its electorate witnessed an extreme – 40% or even stronger – decrease. In addition, with the exception of the Nitra district, erosion was continuous everywhere. In contrast to this, out of the 54 districts of scattered Hungarian communities, the Most-Híd’s electorate grew in the past six years in 45 districts, however, these areas do not provide more than 200-300 voters per district (in some cases 2,000-3,000 at most). We must also see that, in general, the above-average results the party achieved in some districts was only due to the irregular voting behavior of some towns or villages.

It is also of interest to examine in how many towns or villages one of the two parties could win at least half or two-thirds of the votes during the past three elections.

	MKP		Most-Híd	
	Min. 50%	Min. 75%	Min. 50%	Min. 75%
2010	111	5	91	1
2012	141	12	57	1
2016	134	12	25	1

*Table 4: The number of towns/villages in Slovakia according to the defined minimal proportion of votes cast for the MKP or the Most-Híd*

As Table 4 illustrates, in the case of the MKP the values were higher and more stable, while the number of towns and villages voting for the Most-Híd is not only lower, but also decreasing year by year. With respect to the election results at the national level, we can declare that these data prove that the MKP’s electorate can be characterized by a stronger and more stable concentration in towns, while the voters of the Most-Híd are more and more dispersed geographically. In 2010 the MKP received votes in 1,000 towns and vil-lages. In the following two elections this number was approximately 900 both times, thus, voters’ concentration is obvious. In contrast to this, the Most-Híd’s voters – both in 2010 and 2012 – concentrated in 2,500 towns. In 2016 this number grew to 2,700, while the total number of votes the party received decreased. As a result, the average number of MKP-voters was about 110-120 per settlement in the examined elections, while that of the Most-Híd decreased from 81 to 64. Allegorically, we can declare that the social embed-dedness of the Hungarian-Slovak mixed party is wider, while that of the Hungarian ethnic party is deeper.

After examining the most important territorial characteristics of the two parties’ elec-torates, it is important to have a look at their results compared to each other during the past

three elections. Since the Most-Híd's electorate is larger at the national level, we considered its results 100% and examined the proportion of the MKP's votes compared to it.

	2010	2012	2016
<b>BRATISLAVA CONSTITUENCY</b>			
Bratislava	7.9	8.4	6.7
Senec district	27.6	31.9	42.0
<b>TRNAVA CONSTITUENCY</b>			
Dunajská Stred district	64.6	90.1	124.6
Galanta district	48.2	57.5	93.0
<b>NITRA CONSTITUENCY</b>			
Komárno district	76.2	82.5	96.4
Levice district	91.8	134.0	139.4
Nitra district	76.4	79.5	102.6
Nové Zámky district	32.4	27.7	35.6
Šaľa district	59.3	76.1	84.9
<b>BANSKÁ BYSTRICA CONSTITUENCY</b>			
Lučenec district	74.7	71.9	86.8
Revúca district	114.5	119.2	134.4
Rimavská Sobota district	85.7	108.9	112.9
Veľký Krtíš district	97.9	108.6	116.6
<b>KOŠICE CONSTITUENCY</b>			
Košice	17.5	20.5	19.6
Košice-region district	44.3	68.4	74.2
Mihalovce district	77.7	82.7	82.8
Rožňava district	52.7	61.3	85.5
Trebišov district	118.4	110.3	109.5
Areas of dispersed Hungarian communities	2.6	2.1	1.5
<b>TOTAL</b>	53.3	62.2	62.2

*Table 5: The proportion of MKP-votes compared to the votes of the Most-Híd (Most-Híd=100)*

At the national level, proportional difference between the results of the two parties remained significant at all three elections. However, while in 2010 the MKP received more votes only in two southeastern districts, in 2012 this number grew to five, and in 2016 it reached seven (including two districts where Hungarians live in majority). A further positive result for the MKP is that in 2016, it managed to obtain 80% of the Most-Híd's votes in five additional towns. The contradictory situation that – despite the MKP's general catching up and its strengthening in several districts – the Most-Híd's dominance remained stable during the last two elections is due to the Most-Híd's strengthening in the capital and in areas of dispersed Hungarian communities.

At the end of the study, we also touch upon the results connected with the ethnic distribution of the two parties' electorates and the party preferences of Hungarians living in Slovakia, since these questions have been recurrent topics in political analyses focusing on the Hungarian community in Slovakia since the 2009 split within the MKP. Since a study analyzing these questions has been published recently in the volume of the Research Institute for Hungarian Communities Abroad written by one of the authors of this analysis,<sup>4</sup> we do not examine these issues in detail, only summarize its main conclusions.

Although the data on voters' ethnicity are not available because of the anonymous character of the elections, it is possible to estimate their ratio using the data on ethnicity and age group distribution of the 2011 Slovakian census and the statistical data on local elections. This method is considered a new approach compared to previously applied methods based on opinion polls<sup>5</sup> and the examination of political attitudes<sup>6</sup> (the MKP's preference in 2006). This new approach – based on the data of censuses – also made possible the calculation of alternative data on the number of voters, in which people of unknown ethnicity (who constitute 7% of the population) were also included. In addition, if we use this estimation not only in the case of ethnicity data but in statistics on mother tongue as well, we might use even four different parameters in our analysis.

In the light of estimations concerning Hungarian voters, we can arrive at the following conclusions:

- Hungarians' participation in the elections is gradually decreasing, compared to both itself and to the majority (Slovak) ethnic group, while the participation of non-Hungarians is gradually increasing. While in 2010 the political activity of

4 Gábor Harrach, "Etnicitás és pártpreferencia a Felvidéken" [Ethnicity and party preference in Southern Slovakia], *Kisebbségi Szemle* 1, no. 2 (2016):29–52.

5 "Focus: a magyarok 44%-a az MKP-ra, 41%-a a Hídra voksol" [Focus: 44% of Hungarans voted for MKP, 41% for Híd], *Új Szó*, 21 March, 2012.

6 Ábel Ravasz, 'Szlovákiai magyarok mint választók, 2009–2013' [Hungarians in Slovakia as voters 2009–2013]. *Magyar Kisebbség* 18, no. 2 (2013): 41–68.



Hungarians was above the average in almost every district and in areas populated by dispersed Hungarian communities as well, in 2016 this activity was present only in one third of the districts of the Hungarian-populated area.

- The MKP – although it was defeated by the Most-Híd in three elections – became more dominant among Hungarians (presumably) due to the gradually decreasing popularity of the interethnic Most-Híd. In which election this phenomenon was present first and whether it was a relative or absolute majority (taking into account Hungarians who voted for Slovakian parties) depends on the above-mentioned estimation methods.
- If we examine the results according to clusters of towns grouped according to the local ratio of Hungarians, we see that the demographic weight of Hungarians and the preference level for the MKP are directly proportional. Besides, in towns with a significant Hungarian population the popularity of the Most-Híd decreased more decisively.
- Since the establishment of the Most-Híd, its electorate has been ethnically heterogeneous and this feature – due to the gradual drop of Hungarian supporters and the successful involvement of non-Hungarian (Slovakian and Ruthenian) voters – became stronger and stronger. However, according to every credible estimation, Hungarians are (still) in majority in the electorate of the Most-Híd. North of the Hungarian-populated geographic area, the Most-Híd practically operates as a Slovak party, although with a considerably lower number of supporters.

## Summary

In the Slovakian elections voters sent a sharp message to traditional political parties and the elite. Anti-regime and protest parties have gained ground, while moderate, right-wing parties with Christian-Democratic roots – which had been dominant forces for a long time – did not manage to win seats in the parliament. The fight for the leadership of the fragmented right-wing brought new but not very successful parties, and half year after the elections it is still not clear which party and which politician would be able to hold the loyalty of traditional right-wing parties. The strengthening of moderate right-wing parties is further hampered by the fact that the Most-Híd and the #Siet' entered into coalition with the Smer, a party with which liberal and conservative parties are not willing to cooperate. The #Siet' could not survive this step, its parliamentary faction ceased and the party's organization fell apart.

Although the MKP became the winner of the competition for Hungarian votes, it was the third time that it did not manage to win seats in the parliament, therefore, the 100,000-strong community which voted for the Hungarian ethnic party will be left out of the formation of Slovak legislation. Concerning the Most-Híd, it managed to pass the threshold for the third time, although in 2016 it would not have been successful without the votes of ethnic Slovak voters. The MKP and the Most-Híd – which were campaigning against each other – did not manage to address voters more effectively than in previous years. Moreover, the number and share of Hungarians participating in the election never was as low as in 2016. It seems that the fight and rivalry between the two parties made many voters uncertain, who – at the end – decided not to go to the polls. Both parties received less Hungarian votes than four years ago, and negative demographic processes can be mentioned among the primary causes of this phenomenon. During the 2011 census, the number of Hungarians in Slovakia was 458,467, which is 110,000 less than their number was twenty years ago. Presumably, this negative demographic process has not stopped, thus, the number of Hungarians in the country might have decreased by further 25,000 since then.

In general, the MKP was more popular among Hungarians living in a bloc, while the Most-Híd received more votes from Hungarians living in large towns, in the agglomeration near Bratislava and in dispersed communities. In the past six years, the Most-Híd became stronger only in the capital and in areas inhabited by scattered Hungarian communities, thus, in its “success areas”, and in the meantime it lost 50,000 voters in Hungarian-populated districts (its popularity decreased to two-thirds in these regions). In contrast to this, the MKP managed to increase its electorate in territories which earlier had brought weak results for the party: the agglomeration area of the capital and the district of Dunajská Streda where Hungarians live compactly. At the same time, the MKP could “captivate” only a minimal number of people who turned away from the Most-Híd. For winning seats in the parliament, the MKP lacked only 30,000 votes.

The fault line between the two parties is caused by the issue of ethnicity: the interethnic character of the Most-Híd is unacceptable for the MKP, while the former considers politics based on ethnicity anachronistic. The examined data showed that the potential weakening of the Most-Híd does not necessarily leads to “returning” voters to the MKP. In the following period, the Most-Híd as a government party will have several opportunities to persuade Hungarian voters – through its results achieved in government – that it was a right decision to enter into coalition with the Smer and the SNS. For the MKP, which has consistently been below 5%, the main challenges of the coming period will be the addressing and involving of younger generations. The finding of new voting groups, the elaboration of an appropriate program, and political innovation will be necessary to reach these goals.