

Pre-electoral Alliances in the Czech Parliamentary Elections of 2025: Patterns, Motivations and Electoral Effects

Tomáš Jarmara, Ladislav Mrklas¹

Abstract

Electoral alliances¹ have become a significant feature of recent parliamentary elections and of the broader development of Czech politics. Political parties increasingly use pre-electoral cooperation as a response to growing fragmentation of voter preferences and as a strategy to overcome institutional constraints of the electoral system, particularly the electoral threshold. This study analyses open and hidden pre-electoral alliances in the 2025 elections to the Chamber of Deputies of the Czech Republic and examines their effects on parliamentary representation. Methodologically, it combines qualitative analysis of alliance agreements and candidate lists with a quantitative assessment of electoral outcomes. The analysis focuses on the typology of alliances based on their electoral effects, their structural characteristics, and the success of candidates within joint candidate lists. The study contributes to the literature by developing a theoretical distinction between open and hidden alliances, conceptualising hidden alliances as a form of institutional adaptation to electoral rules.

Keywords: pre-electoral alliances; electoral coalitions; party system fragmentation; electoral strategies; parliamentary representation; Czech parliamentary elections

DOI: 10.5817/PC2026-3-43094

CC BY 4.0 (<https://www.creativecommons.cz/licence-cc/>)

¹ Tomáš Jarmara, Associate Professor at CEVRO University, Department of Political Science and International Relations, Jungmannova 17, 110 00 Prague 1, Czech Republic. E-mail: tomas.jarmara@cevro.cz. ORCID: 0000-0001-7861-0843.

Ladislav Mrklas, Researcher at CEVRO University, Department of Political Science and International Relations, Jungmannova 17, 110 00 Prague 1, Czech Republic. E-mail: ladislav.mrklas@cevro.cz. ORCID: 0009-0005-3043-5579.

1. Introduction

Pre-electoral alliances began to play a more prominent role in Czech parliamentary politics during the 2021 elections to the Chamber of Deputies, when they first became a central element of the electoral strategies of major political actors. At that time, cooperation primarily took the form of open and formally institutionalised alliances responding to changes in the rules governing electoral thresholds for joint candidacy and, to a lesser extent, to the preservation of fourteen electoral districts combined with multiple tiers of vote-to-seat conversion (Charvát, 2022).

The parliamentary elections of 2025, however, marked a further shift and deepening of this phenomenon. Coalition strategies were no longer limited to open alliances operating under a common label or shared visual identity, but also included hidden forms of cooperation realised through joint candidacies or the integration of smaller political actors into the candidate lists of dominant parties. The repetition and diversification of coalition arrangements observed in 2025 thus suggest that pre-electoral cooperation has ceased to be an exceptional response to institutional change and has instead become a stable component of the strategic repertoire of Czech political parties. In this context, alliances function not only as instruments for maximising electoral gains but also as mechanisms for managing party system fragmentation and minimising the risk of exclusion from parliamentary representation.

Despite extensive research on electoral alliances, existing literature has devoted relatively limited attention to distinguishing between open and hidden forms of pre-electoral cooperation and to their differentiated effects on parliamentary representation. Scholarly attention has focused predominantly on post-electoral coalitions rather than on the mechanisms of pre-electoral coordination and their consequences for the representation of political parties, movements, and individual candidates. This article seeks to address this gap by analysing both open and hidden pre-electoral alliances in the 2025 Czech parliamentary elections, with particular emphasis on their impact on electoral outcomes and the composition of parliamentary representation, including the role of non-party candidates.

The analysis proceeds along four interrelated dimensions that together provide a systematic framework for examining pre-electoral alliances in the Czech parliamentary context. First, it develops a typology of electoral alliances based on their electoral effects, distinguishing between sub-additive, additive, and super-additive outcomes. Second, it examines the structural characteristics of pre-electoral alliances, focusing on their instrumental orientation, temporary nature, degree of institutionalisation, and mechanisms for preserving party identity. Third, it analyses the motivations driving political parties and movements to engage in pre-electoral cooperation, particularly ideological proximity, strategic calculations related to electoral system parameters, and the pooling of

organisational and personnel resources. Fourth, the study investigates the electoral success of candidates from individual political parties within joint candidate lists, with particular attention to intra-alliance strategies and preferential voting. Methodologically, the article combines qualitative analysis of alliance agreements and candidate lists with quantitative evaluation of electoral results based on official electoral data. In doing so, it contributes to a deeper understanding of coalition behaviour under conditions of a fragmented party system.

2. Theoretical framework

In political science, the concepts of electoral alliances and electoral coalitions are often used interchangeably to denote formalised agreements between political parties concluded prior to elections (Laver & Schofield, 1998; Golder, 2005). However, the literature exhibits considerable variation in how these forms of cooperation are conceptualised, depending on their degree of formality, public visibility, and expected political consequences. Research on pre-electoral cooperation therefore draws on a broader body of scholarship on coalition behaviour, party systems, and electoral institutions, while also engaging with theories of party strategy and electoral behaviour that explain how political actors adapt to institutional constraints and incentives (Cox, 1997; Shugart & Carey, 1992; Gallagher & Mitchell, 2005).

Pre-electoral alliances are conceptualised here as strategic instruments through which political parties seek to maximise electoral support, reduce vote loss, and structure post-election bargaining under conditions of uncertainty and party system fragmentation (Golder, 2006; Debus, 2009). This strategic dimension of pre-electoral cooperation can be linked to more general theories of alliances, which emphasise the importance of credible commitments, incentive management, and the containment of opportunistic behaviour within coalition arrangements (Snyder, 1997).

2.1 Pre-electoral alliances as a theoretical problem

Pre-electoral alliances can be understood not merely as strategic choices of political actors, but as institutionally conditioned responses to the constraints and incentives embedded in electoral systems. In proportional systems with electoral thresholds, such as the Czech Republic, alliances represent a key mechanism through which parties attempt to reduce electoral uncertainty, minimise wasted votes, and improve the translation of votes into seats.

Pre-electoral alliances (PECs) constitute an established object of research at the intersection of coalition theory, electoral studies, and institutional

analysis. A foundational contribution in this field is provided by Golder (2005), who conceptualises PECs as a distinct strategic phenomenon and consistently differentiates them from post-electoral coalitions. Pre-electoral alliances are understood as formal agreements in which two or more parties coordinate their electoral strategies—most commonly through joint candidate lists or explicit commitments to post-election cooperation (Golder, 2006).

The theoretical core of this approach rests on the argument that PECs function as signals to voters by reducing uncertainty regarding likely post-election outcomes in fragmented party systems (Golder, 2005). This framework is structured around two key assumptions. First, the probability of forming a pre-electoral alliance increases as ideological distance between potential partners decreases. Second, the institutional context—particularly the level of electoral system disproportionality and the existence of electoral thresholds—significantly shapes incentives for pre-electoral coordination (Golder, 2006). Subsequent research has extended these arguments by highlighting the role of credible commitments, organisational capacity, and coordination costs in sustaining alliance cooperation (Martin & Stevenson, 2001).

2.2 Strategic coordination and institutional incentives

Although Cox's theory of strategic coordination does not primarily focus on pre-electoral alliances, it provides an important micro-theoretical foundation for understanding their emergence (Cox, 1997). Extending Duvergerian logic, Cox demonstrates how political actors adapt to electoral rules in order to minimise wasted votes and prevent inefficient fragmentation of political competition. In the context of PECs, this implies that parties enter pre-electoral alliances when coordination reduces the need for strategic voting or limits vote splitting within ideologically related camps (Cox, 1997, pp. 91–123).

Institutional incentives play a crucial role in this process. Electoral systems characterised by high disproportionality, electoral thresholds, or small district magnitudes increase the costs of independent electoral competition and thereby strengthen incentives for coordination (Shugart & Taagepera, 2017). Conversely, systems with low barriers to parliamentary entry weaken such incentives.

The institutional context is particularly relevant in the Czech case, where electoral law explicitly distinguishes between independent party competition and formal electoral coalitions, assigning different electoral thresholds (5% for single parties, 8% for two-party coalitions, and 11% for coalitions of three or more parties). This legal framework creates strong disincentives for formal coalition formation while simultaneously encouraging alternative forms of coordination, including informal or 'hidden' alliances that allow parties to circumvent higher thresholds.

These mechanisms are further elaborated through the concepts of vote pooling and seat pooling, which describe how parties can more effectively convert electoral support into parliamentary representation through coordinated strategies (Golder, 2006). The emergence of pre-electoral alliances is closely linked to the dynamics of party system fragmentation. In fragmented party systems, the proliferation of political actors increases the likelihood of vote splitting and electoral inefficiency, thereby strengthening incentives for coordination. Pre-electoral alliances can thus be interpreted as mechanisms of strategic consolidation, mitigating the centrifugal tendencies of fragmented competition while preserving organisational autonomy of individual parties.

Comparative analyses of electoral systems emphasise that district magnitude, electoral thresholds, and vote-to-seat conversion rules create structural pressures toward pre-electoral coordination, particularly in fragmented party systems (Gallagher & Mitchell, 2005).

Formal modelling supports these conclusions. Both empirical and theoretical studies show that pre-electoral alliances tend to emerge under conditions of asymmetry between coalition partners, with smaller parties seeking electoral survival and larger parties attempting to minimise the risks associated with vote splitting (Blais, Indridason, & Bodet, 2011). More recent work highlights the anticipatory role of post-electoral bargaining in coalition formation processes (Indridason 2011). From the perspective of electoral outcomes, coalition effects can be differentiated using the typology of sub-additive, additive, and super-additive results (Kamiński 1997; Moral 2021). Sub-additive effects occur when alliances underperform relative to the sum of their components, additive effects when they reproduce it, and super-additive effects when they exceed it.

Beyond the international literature, Czech political science provides an important contextual background, although pre-electoral alliances have rarely been examined as a distinct analytical object. Domestic research has traditionally focused on electoral systems, party competition, and voting behaviour, addressing pre-electoral cooperation only indirectly (Lebeda, 2006; Linek, 2012). Analyses of electoral rules and thresholds demonstrate how institutional settings structure party strategies and incentives for coordination in fragmented party systems, while research on party system development highlights increasing volatility and strategic flexibility among political actors (Kubát, 2013). Studies of preferential voting and political personalisation further identify mechanisms directly relevant to the analysis of hidden forms of pre-electoral coordination, particularly in candidate placement and the mobilisation of preferential votes (Voženílková & Šedo, 2015). A specific contribution is provided by analyses of power distribution within coalition governments formed after the 2021 elections, which show—using coalition theory and power indices—that formal pre-electoral agreements do not necessarily correspond to actual influence of coalition partners (Jarmara, 2021). Other authors address related aspects, such as the spatial dimension of pre-

electoral cooperation (Drašar, 2025), or the relationship between pre-electoral alliances in first-order elections and those formed for other electoral arenas in the Czech Republic, including Senate, regional, and municipal elections (see Ibenskas, 2016; Gross et al., 2022; Voda, 2022; Škvrňák, 2024).

2.3 Conceptual distinction: open and hidden pre-electoral alliances

To link theoretical expectations with empirical analysis, this study distinguishes between open and hidden pre-electoral alliances. Open alliances are publicly recognisable forms of cooperation communicated to voters through joint candidate lists, a shared electoral label, or explicit commitments to joint governing after elections. Owing to their high signalling value, such alliances may reduce voter uncertainty regarding post-electoral outcomes, particularly in fragmented party systems (Golder, 2006; Hobolt & Karp, 2010).

Hidden alliances, by contrast, involve coordination that is not publicly framed as a coalition project but operates through mechanisms such as candidate placement, tacit non-competition, coordinated mobilisation of preferential votes, or informal post-electoral commitments. Hidden pre-electoral alliances can be conceptualised as a form of informal institutional adaptation to formal electoral rules. Unlike open alliances, which operate within the legal framework of electoral coalitions, hidden alliances allow political actors to coordinate without incurring the institutional costs associated with formal coalition status. In this sense, hidden alliances may be interpreted as strategies of institutional circumvention, enabling parties to achieve the functional benefits of cooperation while avoiding regulatory constraints.

Although they lack an explicit signalling function, hidden alliances may substantially shape intra-alliance power relations and the electoral success of individual candidates (Ibenskas, 2016; Schlozman, 2015). The distinction between open and hidden alliances is therefore analytically consequential, as it implies different mechanisms of electoral responsiveness, credibility, and performance, as well as distinct legal and financial implications.

In line with the comparative literature, pre-electoral alliances are conceptualised here as instrumentally oriented, identity-preserving, and temporary arrangements, rather than as permanent party mergers (Snyder 1997; Laver & Schofield 1998; Golder, 2006). In the Czech context, open pre-electoral alliances typically correspond to formally registered electoral coalitions as defined by electoral law. However, the distinction between open and hidden alliances employed in this study is primarily analytical rather than legal, as it focuses on the degree of public visibility and coordination rather than solely on formal institutional status.

2.4 Theoretical expectations

Based on the theoretical framework outlined above, the study formulates the following expectations:

- H1 (Institutionalisation and electoral effects): open pre-electoral alliances are more likely to generate super-additive electoral effects than hidden alliances, due to their stronger signalling function and higher visibility to voters.
- H2 (Hidden alliances as defensive strategies): hidden pre-electoral alliances are more likely to produce additive or sub-additive electoral effects, as their primary function is to prevent vote splitting rather than to expand electoral support.
- H3 (Fragmentation and alliance formation): the likelihood of forming pre-electoral alliances increases with the level of party system fragmentation and the presence of institutional barriers such as electoral thresholds.
- H4 (Preferential voting): preferential voting is more likely to affect intra-alliance seat distribution in open alliances than in hidden alliances, due to differences in candidate placement strategies and campaign coordination.

3. Data and methods

3.1 Data sources

The quantitative analysis draws on official electoral results provided by the Czech Statistical Office (Volby.cz database), which contain detailed information on candidate lists, preferential votes, seat allocation, and the regional distribution of electoral support in the 2025 elections to the Chamber of Deputies. These data constitute the empirical basis for assessing the electoral effects of pre-electoral alliances and the electoral success of candidates competing on alliance lists.

Trends in electoral support prior to the formation of alliances are captured using publicly available opinion polls conducted by KANTAR, STEM, and IPSOS. Between January and September 2025, polling data increasingly focused on electoral alliances rather than on individual parties, resulting in incomplete information on independently competing actors at certain points in time. Despite this limitation, the data remain analytically relevant for evaluating coalition effects by comparing pre-alliance support levels with actual electoral outcomes.

The institutional context is examined through relevant electoral legislation and rulings of the Constitutional Court of the Czech Republic, complemented by selected analytical materials issued by the Office of the Government of the Czech Republic. The qualitative component of the analysis relies on coalition agreements, electoral programmes, candidate lists, and public statements by political actors.

3.2 Analytical strategy

The analytical strategy combines descriptive quantitative analysis with qualitative content and institutional analysis. The quantitative component compares aggregated pre-alliance electoral support of individual parties with the actual electoral performance of open and hidden alliances, allowing for their classification as sub-additive, additive, or super-additive. In addition, preferential voting is analysed at the candidate level in order to assess the intra-alliance distribution of parliamentary seats.

The qualitative analysis focuses on the organisational and strategic characteristics of pre-electoral alliances, particularly their degree of institutionalisation, mechanisms of party identity preservation, and the motivations driving political actors to cooperate prior to elections. The combination of quantitative and qualitative approaches enables the study to capture both the electoral consequences of alliances and their underlying strategic logic.

4. Analysis of open and hidden pre-electoral alliances in the 2025 elections

Chapter 4 presents an empirical analysis of open and hidden pre-electoral alliances in Czech parliamentary elections in 2021 and 2025. The analysis is structured into four thematic subsections that sequentially address the electoral effects of alliances, their structural characteristics, the motivations of political actors to engage in pre-electoral cooperation, and the electoral success of candidates competing on joint candidate lists.

Empirical attention is devoted to all electorally relevant pre-electoral alliances that achieved parliamentary representation in the 2025 elections. This includes both the openly declared SPOLU alliance, which contested both elections under review, and multiple forms of hidden pre-electoral cooperation realised through candidate integration on party lists. These include, in particular, cooperation centred on Svoboda a přímá demokracie (Freedom and Direct Democracy, SPD), the Czech Pirate Party (Pirates), the Mayors and Independents movement (STAN), and the electoral subject Motorists for Themselves.

4.1 Electoral effects of pre-electoral alliances

This subsection focuses on the forms of pre-electoral cooperation and the composition of electoral alliances competing in the 2025 elections to the Chamber of Deputies (Table 1).

The analysis concentrates on all electorally relevant pre-electoral alliances that surpassed the threshold for parliamentary representation in the 2025

elections to the Chamber of Deputies.² The distinction between open and hidden alliances is based on the degree of institutionalisation of cooperation, the existence of a shared alliance label, and the transparency of candidacy vis-à-vis voters. Electoral subjects that did not achieve parliamentary representation, such as the Stačilo! list, are not included in the analysis, as the study focuses on alliances with observable effects on parliamentary seat allocation.

Table 1:
Open and Hidden Pre-Electoral Alliances in the 2025 Czech Parliamentary Elections

Type of Alliance	Electoral Subject	Alliance Composition
Pre-Electoral Alliance	SPOLU	ODS – KDU-ČSL – TOP 09
Hidden Pre-Electoral Alliance	SPD	SPD + PRO + Free Citizens + Tricolour
Hidden Pre-Electoral Alliance	Pirates	Pirates + individual candidates of the Greens
Hidden Pre-Electoral Alliance	STAN	STAN + regional and local political actors
Hidden Pre-Electoral Alliance	Motorists for Themselves	Motorists + candidates affiliated with another political party

Source: Authors.

Open pre-electoral alliances competed under a common name and with a unified candidate list, thereby explicitly signalling the coalition character of cooperation. In the 2025 elections, this type of alliance was represented exclusively by the SPOLU alliance, composed of ODS, KDU-ČSL, and TOP 09. The joint candidacy of these parties was the result of long-term coordination and built upon previous experience with alliance cooperation.

Hidden pre-electoral alliances, by contrast, did not contest the elections as autonomous electoral subjects. Cooperation was realised through the nomination of candidates affiliated with alliance partners on the candidate lists of a dominant actor, without the creation of a separate alliance label. Typical examples of this strategy include the cooperation between SPD and candidates from PRO, the Free Citizens Party, and Tricolour, as well as the candidacy of selected members of the Green Party on Pirate Party lists.

While all electorally relevant alliances are included in the analytical framework, detailed quantitative comparison of electoral effects is limited to cases for which sufficiently robust and comparable pre-election polling data are available.

In the case of certain electoral subjects, such as STAN and Motorists for Themselves, directly comparable pre-election polling data are not available, as these actors were not consistently measured as separate entities by major polling agencies prior to the election. Consequently, these cases cannot be included in the quantitative comparison of pre-electoral support and electoral outcomes, and are therefore analysed primarily in qualitative terms.

By analysing selected cases for which sufficiently comparable pre-election preference data are available, it is possible to distinguish between sub-additive, additive, and super-additive electoral effects. For this purpose, all available data on pre-election support for independently competing political parties were included in the analysis. Aggregated pre-electoral preferences were calculated as simple sums of party support, without weighting for turnout or electoral volatility. This approach enables a systematic comparison between aggregated pre-electoral support and achieved electoral results and captures differences in electoral mobilisation as well as in the capacity of alliances to consolidate electorates under the institutional constraints of the electoral system. These comparisons should be interpreted with caution, as pre-election polls represent estimates rather than actual electoral behaviour. While this comparison does not capture the full temporal dynamics of electoral competition, it provides a useful heuristic for assessing the potential effects of pre-electoral coordination.

The most pronounced case of a super-additive electoral effect was observed for the open SPOLU alliance, which is consistent with theoretical expectations regarding the electoral advantages of highly institutionalised and visible forms of pre-electoral cooperation. Throughout most of 2025, the aggregated pre-election preferences of ODS, TOP 09, and KDU-ČSL remained below the alliance's final electoral result (Table 2). The SPOLU coalition thus not only consolidated the traditional electorates of its constituent parties but also appears to have mobilised a share of undecided voters and potentially attracted segments beyond their long-term electoral bases. Although individual polling agencies differed in absolute estimates, the underlying pattern of super-additivity appears to be relatively consistent across data sources. The temporal dynamics of pre-election preferences suggest that a stable alliance label and continuity of cooperation may have contributed to the gradual strengthening of the alliance's electoral potential. Taken together, these findings can be interpreted as a super-additive electoral effect. The comparison is therefore not intended as a precise measurement of electoral performance, but rather as an indicative approximation of the potential effects of pre-electoral coordination.

Table 2:
Development of Pre-Electoral Preferences of Individual Political Parties
and the Coalition in 2025 (%)

Political party	IPSOS January	IPSOS March	IPSOS May/June	IPSOS September	SPOLU Coalition Electoral Result 23.36
ODS	11	12	13	13	
KDU-ČSL	4	5	5	5	
TOP 09	4	5	5	4	
Σ SPOLU	19	22	23	22	

Political party	KANTAR January	KANTAR February	KANTAR March	KANTAR April	KANTAR May	KANTAR June	SPOLU Coalition Electoral Result 23.36
ODS	13.0	12.5	13.5	14.0	15.0	14.5	
KDU-ČSL	3.0	3.5	3.0	3.0	3.0	3.0	
TOP 09	4.0	3.0	3.0	3.0	3.5	4.5	
Σ SPOLU	20.0	19.0	19.5	20.0	21.5	22.0	

Source: Electoral preferences of IPSOS, KANTAR: available on their websites.

Hidden alliances followed a different logic, which corresponds to theoretical expectations that such forms of cooperation primarily fulfil defensive and stabilising functions rather than generating substantial electoral gains. In the case of cooperation between SPD and candidates from smaller parties, the alliance mechanism was primarily defensive in nature. The electoral effect of this cooperation can be characterised as predominantly additive or weakly sub-additive (Table 3). Empirical evidence suggests that the presence of smaller parties on SPD candidate lists did not lead to a substantial expansion of the electorate but rather facilitated the absorption of potential competition within an ideologically proximate segment. In this context, the hidden alliance can be interpreted as a tool for neutralising fragmentation and overcoming institutional barriers of the electoral system, rather than as a mechanism of active electoral mobilisation.

Table 3:
Development of Pre-Electoral Preferences of Individual Political Parties
and the Coalition in 2025 (%)

Political party	STEM January	STEM February	STEM March	SPD - bloc Electoral Result 7.78
SPD	6.1	7.8	8.4	
PRO	0.4	0.3	0.2	
Free Citizens	0.7	1.1	0.6	
Trikolóra	0.1	0.1	0.0	
Σ SPD-bloc	7.3	9.3	9.2	

Political party	IPSOS January	IPSOS March	IPSOS May/June	IPSOS September	SPD - bloc Electoral Result 7.78
SPD	9	10	10	11	
PRO	1	1	1.5	1.5	
Free Citizens	2	2	2	2	
Trikolóra	2	2	2	2	
Σ SPD-bloc	14	15	15.5	16.5	

Source: Electoral preferences of IPSOS, STEM available on their websites.

A specific form of cooperation was represented by the candidacy of selected Green Party members on Pirate Party lists (Table 4). Although aggregated pre-election preferences of both actors reached levels corresponding to an additive effect in some surveys, the final electoral outcome only partially reflects this potential. The absence of a separate alliance label and the limited visibility of cooperation for voters likely constrained the transformative capacity of this strategy, which remained primarily a selective form of personnel integration.

Table 4:
Development of Pre-Electoral Preferences of Individual Political Parties
and the Coalition in 2025 (%)

Political party	KANTAR January	KANTAR February	KANTAR March	KANTAR April	KANTAR May	KANTAR June	Pirates + Greens Electoral Result 8.97
Pirates	7.5	6.5	5.5	6.0	6.5	7.0	
Greens	-	2.0	2.0	-	-	2.0	
Σ Pirates + Greens	7.5	8.5	7.5	6.0	6.5	9.0	

Political party	STEM January	STEM February	STEM March	STEM April	STEM May	STEM June	STEM August	Pirates + Greens Electoral Result 8.97
Pirates	4.5	5.6	4.7	3.5	4.5	6.7	7.3	
Greens	1.9	1.6	0.8	0.9	0.7			
Σ Pirates + Greens	6.4	7.2	5.5	4.4	5.2	6.7	7.3	

Political party	IPSOS January	IPSOS March	IPSOS May/June	IPSOS September	Pirates + Greens Electoral Result 8.97
Pirates	8	7	7.5	8	
Greens	3	3	2.5	2	
Σ Pirates + Greens	11	10	10	10	

Source: Electoral preferences of IPSOS, KANTAR, STEM available on their websites.

Further instances of hidden pre-electoral cooperation are represented by the STAN movement and the Motorists for Themselves electoral subject. In both cases, cooperation was realised through the inclusion of candidates affiliated with other political actors on the candidate lists of a dominant party, without the creation of a formal coalition label.

In the case of STAN, candidate lists incorporated representatives of several regional and local political groupings, reflecting a decentralised and territorially embedded form of coordination. This type of cooperation can be interpreted as a structurally embedded variant of hidden alliance, primarily oriented towards the aggregation of local political capital rather than explicit electoral mobilisation at the national level.

Similarly, the Motorists for Themselves electoral subject included candidates affiliated with another political party, representing a more limited but still analytically relevant form of hidden pre-electoral cooperation. In this case, can be interpreted as having functioned primarily as a mechanism of candidate integration and electoral support consolidation within a relatively narrow political segment. In both cases, the electoral effects of cooperation can be interpreted as predominantly additive, which is in line with expectations regarding the limited

mobilising capacity of hidden alliances and their role in mitigating fragmentation-related risks.

These findings broadly correspond to the theoretical expectations outlined in the previous section, suggesting that the degree of institutionalisation and visibility of pre-electoral alliances plays an important role in shaping their electoral effects. From a comparative perspective, super-additive electoral effects appear to be relatively rare in the Czech context and are contingent upon a combination of clear institutionalisation of the alliance, long-term pre-electoral coordination, and a high degree of programmatic compatibility, although the limited number of cases analysed does not allow for broader generalisation. Hidden alliances, by contrast, generally appear to fulfil instrumental and stabilising functions. Rather than aiming to substantially expand electoral support, they tend to serve to optimise candidate supply and minimise risks associated with party system fragmentation. These findings should be interpreted as indicative rather than definitive, but they provide a useful empirical basis for assessing the broader institutional and strategic implications of pre-electoral alliances within the Czech party system.

4.2 Structural characteristics of open and hidden alliances and motivations for pre-electoral cooperation

The pre-electoral alliances analysed in this study are predominantly temporary and instrumental, tied to a specific electoral cycle and political configuration. An exception is the SPOLU alliance, formed prior to the 2021 parliamentary elections and directly building on this experience in the period under review. All analysed cases share the preservation of distinct party identities and the absence of deeper institutional integration, distinguishing these arrangements from formal party mergers.³

Motivations for forming pre-electoral alliances can be analytically grouped into three main categories: (1) ideological proximity between partners, (2) strategic calculations related to the electoral system, and (3) the pooling of organisational, personnel, and voter resources. A context-specific motivation concerns efforts to maximise the chances of becoming the principal governing or opposition actor, including securing or retaining the prime ministerial position. In the Czech context, particular attention has also been paid to the risk of vote wastage resulting from smaller, ideologically proximate parties failing to surpass the five per cent threshold—an issue that gained salience after the 2021 elections, when the loss of roughly one fifth of votes contributed to the formation of a majority government by the SPOLU and Pirates/STAN alliances (Jarmara, 2021). These motivations combine with varying intensity across cases.

The SPOLU alliance was originally formed in 2021 through a combination of ideological proximity, strategic calculations regarding the newly adjusted electoral system, and the objective of aggregating opposition support against the dominant actor in Czech politics, the ANO 2011 movement led by Andrej Babiš. Its position as the main opposition challenger was not self-evident, as this role was contested by the Pirates and Mayors and Independents (see Jarmara, 2021; Havlík & Kluknavská, 2022; Havlík & Lysek, 2022).

By 2025, the primary motivation for the continued cooperation of ODS, KDU-ČSL, and TOP 09 lay mainly in electoral system considerations and the need to consolidate support for the incumbent governing force in the face of the growing dominance of ANO 2011. A key factor was the sustained electoral vulnerability of the smaller coalition partners hovering around the five per cent threshold, alongside ODS's ambition to retain the prime ministerial post. Positive experiences from joint government participation and gradual ideological convergence—strengthened by a greater emphasis on security and the international order—also played an important role.

Hidden pre-electoral alliances centred on SPD and the Pirate Party were motivated primarily by resource pooling and efforts to enhance the electoral viability of smaller actors through candidacy on a stronger party platform. This logic was particularly evident in the case of SPD, where all partner organisations consistently lagged far below the electoral threshold in opinion polls. Recurrent difficulties in recruiting strong regional leaders further added a personnel dimension to this cooperation.

Substantial differences also emerged in the degree of institutionalisation (see Table 5, Table 6). The SPOLU alliance was based on an explicit coalition agreement regulating programme coordination, candidate selection, campaign organisation, financing, and post-election procedures. By contrast, the hidden alliances of SPD and the Pirate Party were formalised through memoranda of cooperation that nevertheless regulated individual aspects of collaboration in considerable detail—most notably in the case of the Pirates and the Greens. From the perspective of electoral law, it is crucial that SPD and the Pirate Party acted as the sole nominators of candidates, thereby avoiding classification as electoral coalitions.

The programmatic dimension of cooperation likewise reflected differences between open and hidden alliances. SPOLU entered the 2025 elections with a joint programme developed through inter-party coordination, whereas hidden alliances relied on programmes unilaterally formulated by the dominant party. In the case of the Pirates and the Greens, smaller partners were bound by the programme not only during the campaign but also in legislative activity, while cooperation around SPD reflected partner influence more indirectly and selectively. Overall, the degree of shared programme formulation closely corresponded to the level of institutionalisation and formal symmetry of cooperation.

Given the high level of state funding of political parties in the Czech Republic, pre-electoral alliances necessarily addressed both campaign financing and the subsequent distribution of public subsidies. SPOLU adopted a relatively symmetrical cost-sharing model reflecting the balance of power among its partners. In contrast, cooperation between the Pirates and the Greens exhibited pronounced financial asymmetry in favour of the dominant actor, with subsidy allocation specified in detail. The SPOLU coalition agreement did not explicitly regulate the distribution of state funding; however, past practice suggests allocation according to campaign contributions and seats obtained. The situation surrounding cooperation between SPD and its partners is less transparent, with media reports indicating that smaller partners receive only a marginal share of state subsidies, while the dominant portion accrues to SPD.

Neither form of institutionalisation resulted in the dissolution or substantial weakening of the participating parties. Whereas SPOLU partners established separate parliamentary groups coordinated through a coalition council, both SPD and the Pirates formed a single parliamentary group under the label of the dominant party.

Table 5:
Institutional and Formal Characteristics of Pre-Electoral Alliances

Electoral subject (under law) ----- Legal form	Candidacy	Type of agreement	Parties nominate candidates (under law)	Regional leaders	Shared campaign features (logo/ programme)	Campaign financing
SPOLU ----- Coalition of three parties	Pre-defined allocation key for distributing candidates among the three parties	Coalition agreement	3	3	Yes/Yes	In the ratio 55: 22.5: 22.5
SPD ----- Single party	Candidates nominated on the list of a single contesting party	Memorandum of cooperation	1	4	No/ No (information on binding character not available)	Info not available
Pirates ----- Single party	Candidates nominated on the list of a single contesting party	Memorandum of cooperation	1	1	No/ No (the Pirates' programme is binding for the Greens)	Pirates min. CZK 50 million; Greens min. CZK 1 million

Source: Authors' compilation based on SPOLU (2025a), Pirates (2025a), SPD (2025), and Czech media sources.

Table 6:
Post-Electoral Behaviour and Parliamentary Cooperation

Electoral subject	Parliamentary group(s)	Form of cooperation in the Chamber of Deputies	Post-electoral bargaining
SPOLU	Separate parliamentary groups	Coordination within a coalition council; joint allocation of positions	Joint strategy defined by the coalition council
SPD	Single parliamentary group (SPD)	Information not available	Coordinated approach; in practice, entry into the governing coalition
Pirates	Single parliamentary group (Pirates)	Voting in line with the Pirates, with exceptions for 'uncovered' policy areas	The Pirates submit their strategy to the Greens prior to approval

Source: Authors' compilation based on SPOLU (2025a), Pirates (2025a), SPD (2025), and Czech media sources.

4.3 Candidate success and preferential voting
on coalition candidate lists

Preferential voting constitutes a key mechanism for analysing intra-alliance dynamics and the distribution of political representation. Analytically, three interrelated dimensions can be distinguished: candidate list formation strategies, the regulation of individual campaigns, and the actual use of preferential votes and their effects on seat allocation.

The analysed alliances adopted distinct strategies in constructing their candidate lists. The SPOLU alliance relied on an approximate assessment of the proportional electoral strength of its constituent parties, which was reflected both in the overall number of candidates and in the allocation of top positions on candidate lists, including regional lead candidates. SPOLU voters made extensive use of preferential voting, which resulted in substantial shifts in the final distribution of parliamentary seats (Grim, 2026).

The Pirates offered the Greens a limited number of candidate positions, largely outside leading list positions. Nevertheless, Pirate voters used preferential votes more frequently than any other electorate and were relatively receptive to candidates affiliated with the partner party. By contrast, SPD adopted a strategy of concentrating candidates from partner organisations in top list positions, thereby minimising the risk of preferential vote-induced reshuffling and effectively securing the election of selected individuals.

Rules governing individual campaigns were most explicitly specified within the cooperation between the Pirates and the Greens, largely in response to experiences from the 2021 elections (Jarmara, 2021). The Memorandum of Cooperation substantially restricted independent campaigning by Greens

candidates and established binding rules for the use of preferential voting (Pirates 2025a). By comparison, the SPOLU coalition agreement addressed individual campaigning only in general terms, while detailed information on campaign regulation is not available in the case of SPD.

Preferential voting led to partial shifts in intra-alliance power balances. Within the SPOLU alliance, KDU-ČSL again benefited disproportionately, gaining four additional seats at the expense of ODS, while reciprocal gains between ODS and TOP 09 effectively cancelled each other out. In the case of the Pirates and the Greens, preferential voting resulted in two seats being won by Greens candidates, despite the fact that the party would not have secured parliamentary representation based on the original list order. No significant reshuffling occurred on SPD candidate lists, confirming the effectiveness of its list-construction strategy in limiting the impact of preferential voting. These intra-alliance shifts in seat allocation are summarised in Table 7.

Overall, the findings demonstrate that preferential voting operates as a critical intervening mechanism between alliance design and representational outcomes. Its effects vary systematically with candidate placement strategies and the degree of regulation of individual campaigns, thereby reinforcing or, in some cases, partially offsetting the intended distribution of seats within pre-electoral alliances.

Table 7:
The quotient of political parties on candidate lists and the number of mandates obtained (%)

Parliamentary elections 2025	Parties	Share of candidates: absolutely	Share: first ten places	Share: first five places	Share of leaders'	Share of additional mandates obtained	Mandates obtained
SPOLU	ODS	51.03	52.14	50.00	71.43	0.00	50.00
	KDU-ČSL	24.93	26.43	28.57	14.29	7.69	29.63
	TOP 09	24.05	21.43	21.43	14,29	0.00	16.67
SPD	SPD	98.25	95.71	91,43	71.43	0.00	73.33
	Tricolours	0.58	1.43	2.86	7.14	0.00	6.67
	PRO	0.58	1.43	2.86	7.14	0.00	6.67
	Free	0.58	1.43	2.86	14.29	0.00	13.33
Pirates	Pirates	90.96	90.71	92.86	100.00	0.00	88.89
	Greens	9.04	9.29	7.14	0.00	11.11	11.11

Source: Authors' calculations based on Czech Statistical Office 2025.

5. Conclusion: Discussion, implications, and directions for future research

The empirical findings broadly support the theoretical expectations outlined in the theoretical framework. In particular, the analysis is broadly consistent with the importance of institutionalisation and visibility of alliances (H1), the predominantly defensive character of hidden alliances (H2), and the role of fragmentation and institutional constraints in shaping alliance strategies (H3). Evidence regarding preferential voting (H4) further highlights its conditional impact on intra-alliance representation.

The empirical analysis of open and hidden pre-electoral alliances in the Czech parliamentary elections of 2021 and 2025 confirms that such arrangements should not be understood as steps toward long-term party integration. Rather, they function primarily as instrumental strategies of adaptation to the institutional design of the electoral system and to the increasing fragmentation of party competition. In the Czech context, pre-electoral alliances serve mainly as mechanisms of strategic coordination aimed at minimizing wasted votes, optimizing the translation of electoral support into parliamentary seats, and reducing the risk of exclusion from parliamentary representation.

The findings further demonstrate that alliance strategies are not static but respond sensitively to changing institutional and political incentives. Whereas the 2021 elections were dominated by open and explicitly institutionalized alliances capable of aggregating opposition support and generating a substantial mobilization effect, the 2025 elections exhibit a greater diversification of forms of pre-electoral coordination. Alongside the continued presence of the open SPOLU alliance, hidden alliances gained prominence as a means of pooling organizational, personnel, and electoral resources while limiting the costs associated with a visible coalition brand and formal institutionalization.

The distinction between open and hidden alliances thus proves analytically crucial. The open SPOLU alliance represents an exceptional case of a super-additive electoral effect, in which a stable coalition brand, a high degree of institutionalization, and a clear signal of governing competence produced an electoral outcome exceeding the simple aggregate of pre-coalition preferences. This result aligns with theoretical expectations that visible and credible pre-electoral commitments increase the returns to coordination in proportional electoral systems. By contrast, hidden alliance arrangements—most notably the placement of candidates from smaller parties on the lists of dominant actors—generated predominantly additive or mildly subadditive effects. Their strategic logic lay less in electoral expansion beyond existing constituencies than in defending against vote splitting within ideologically adjacent camps and overcoming institutional thresholds.

Preferential voting emerges as a central mechanism shaping the internal dynamics of pre-electoral alliances. The empirical evidence shows that open

candidate lists create opportunities for intense intra-alliance competition, which may undermine collective coalition strategies and redistribute mandates in favor of parties with more disciplined or more strongly personalized electorates. Preferential voting thus operates as a key intervening variable between party-level coordination and the final composition of parliamentary representation. In hidden alliances, by contrast, this source of volatility is largely contained through candidate placement strategies and more restrictive rules of cooperation, thereby stabilizing intra-alliance outcomes.

From a broader institutional perspective, the study suggests that the Czech electoral system incentivizes not only the formation of pre-electoral alliances as such but also the differentiation of their organizational forms. Open alliances benefit from a strong signaling effect vis-à-vis voters but entail higher reputational, organizational, and legal costs. Hidden alliances reduce these costs at the expense of limited mobilization potential and increased legal and normative ambiguity. In this sense, hidden alliances can be understood as a functional yet institutionally ambivalent alternative to formal coalition projects.

The findings of this study open several avenues for future research. First, a comparative extension to other proportional electoral systems with legal thresholds would allow for an assessment of whether open and hidden pre-electoral alliances constitute a general strategy of adaptation to fragmented party competition or represent a specific feature of the Czech institutional environment. The countries of the Visegrád Group provide a particularly promising context for such comparison. Second, further research should more systematically examine the micro-level dynamics of preferential voting to determine whether voter behaviour on coalition lists is driven primarily by strategic considerations or by candidate-centred motivations. Linking aggregate electoral data with individual-level post-electoral surveys would enable a more nuanced understanding of the interaction between party alliance strategies and voter decision-making. Third, the results invite a normative and institutional debate on how pre-electoral cooperation might be anchored more transparently and coherently within Czech electoral law, without undermining the rational adaptation of political actors to the conditions of fragmented party competition.

References:

- Balík, S., & Hruška, J. (2022). When preferential voting really matters: The Czech parliamentary election of 2021. *Czech Journal of Political Science*, 29(3), 316–341. <https://doi.org/10.5817/PC2022-3-316>
- Blais, A., Indridason, I. H., & Bodet, M. A. (2011). Candidate strategies in electoral systems. *British Journal of Political Science*, 41(2), 325–344.
- Česko. (2021). Act No. 247/1995 Sb., on Elections to the Parliament of the Czech Republic, as Amended. <https://www.zakonyprolidi.cz/cs/1995-247#cast1>
- Charvát, J. (2022). The 2021 Czech Parliamentary Electoral Reform. *Acta Politologica*, 14(2), 6–22. https://doi.org/10.14712/1803-8220/6_2022
- Chiru, M. (2015). Multiple candidacies and the alignment of parties. *Party Politics*, 21(6), 919–931.
- Chromý, M., & Doležal, K. (2025). Není koalice jako koalice: volební kalkul a jeho limity. *Transparency International*. <https://www.transparency.cz/neni-koalice-jako-koalice-volebni-kalkul-a-jeho-limity/>
- Cox, G. W. (1997). *Making Votes Count: Strategic Coordination in the World's Electoral Systems*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Czech Statistical Office. (2025). Volby do Poslanecké sněmovny Parlamentu České republiky konané ve dnech 3.–4. 10. <https://www.volby.cz/app/ps2025/cs/home>
- Debus, M. (2009). Pre-electoral commitments and government formation. *Public Choice*, 138(1–2), 45–64.
- Drašar, M. (2025). Volební koalice ve stínu pandemie: faktory volební podpory a jejich proměna ve volbách do Poslanecké sněmovny 2017 a 2021. *Sociologický časopis / Czech Sociological Review*, 61(4), 401–422.
- Fiala, P. (2025, March 25). *Projev Petra Fialy při podpisu koaliční smlouvy SPOLU o společné kandidatuře ve sněmovních volbách 2025*. ODS – Občanská demokratická strana. <https://www.ods.cz/clanek/27053-projev-petra-fialy-pri-podpisu-koalicni-smlouvy-spolu-o-spolecne-kandidature-ve-snemovnich-volbach-2025>
- Gallagher, M., & Mitchell, P. (2005). *The Politics of Electoral Systems*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Golder, S. N. (2005). Pre-electoral coalitions in comparative perspective: A test of existing hypotheses. *Electoral Studies*, 24(4), 643–663.
- Golder, S. N. (2006). *The Logic of Pre-Electoral Coalition Formation*. Columbus: Ohio State University Press.
- Grim, J. (2026, January 22). *Nová data o koalicích i „pseudokoalicích“*. Spojení s menšími skrylo slabší SPD, účel splnilo i Spolu. iROZHLAS. https://www.irozhlas.cz/zpravy-domov/nova-data-o-koalicich-i-pseudokoalicich-spojeni-s-mensimi-skrylo-slabsi-spd-ucel_2601220620_jgr
- Gross, M., Krauss, S., & Praprotník, K. (2022). Electoral strategies in multilevel systems: The effect of national politics on regional elections. *Regional Studies*, 57(5), 844–856. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00343404.2022.2107193>
- Havlík, V., & Kluknavská, A. (2022). The populist vs. anti-populist divide in the time of pandemic: The Czech parliamentary elections of 2021. *Journal of Common Market Studies*, 60(6), 1600–1618. <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/jcms.13339>
- Havlík, V., & Lysek, J. (2022). The Czech 2021 general election and its impact on the party system. *Czech Journal of Political Science*, 29(1), 3–27. <https://czechpolsci.eu/article/view/34007>
- Hobolt, S. B., & Karp, J. A. (2010). Voters and Coalition Governments. *Electoral Studies*, 29, 299–307. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.electstud.2010.03.010>
- Ibenskas, R. (2016). Understanding pre-electoral coalitions in Central and Eastern Europe. *British Journal of Political Science*, 46(4), 743–761.
- Indridason, I. H. (2011). Proportional representation, majoritarian legislatures, and coalition voting. *American Journal of Political Science*, 55(4), 955–971. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1540-5907.2011.00530.x>
- Jarmara, T. (2021). Distribution of seats in the new 2021 Czech government coalition in terms of coalition theories and power indices of political parties. *Central European Journal of Politics*, 7(2), 4–27.

- Kamiński, M. M. (1997). Coalitional stability of parliamentary governments. *American Political Science Review*, 91(4), 914–927.
- Klukkanavská, A., Novotná, M., & Eisele, O. (2023). Fuming mad and jumping with joy: Emotional responses to uncivil and post-truth communication by populist and non-populist politicians on Facebook during the COVID-19 crisis. *Mass Communication and Society*.
- Kubát, M. (2013). *Současná česká politika. Co s neefektivním režimem?* Brno: Barrister & Principal.
- Kupka, M. (2026, January 17). *Nominační projev Martina Kupky před volbou předsedy ODS*. ODS – Občanská demokratická strana. <https://www.ods.cz/kongres/2026/nominacni-projevy/clanek/27930-nominacni-projev-martina-kupky-pred-volbou-predsedy-ods>
- Laver, M., & Schofield, N. (1998). *Multiparty Government: The Politics of Coalition in Europe*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press.
- Lebeda, T. (2006). *Volební systémy poměrného zastoupení*. Prague: SLON.
- Linek, L. (2012). *Kam se ztratili voliči?*. Prague: SLON.
- Martin, L. W., & Stevenson, R. T. (2001). Government formation in parliamentary democracies. *American Journal of Political Science*, 45(1), 33–50.
- Ministerstvo financí ČR. (2026). *Politické strany a hnutí: informace a přehled o příspěvcích ze státního rozpočtu*.
- Moral, M. (2021). The story of electoral alliances. In E. S. Herron, R. J. Pekkanen, & M. S. Shugart (Eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of Electoral Systems* (pp. 1–24). Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Nádvorník, P. (2025, November 14). *Hotovo. Piráti jsou ve Sněmovně totálně bez funkcí*. Novinky.cz. <https://www.novinky.cz/clanek/domaci-pirati-totalne-bez-funkci-nedostali-se-do-vedeni-snemovny-ani-vyboru-40548979>
- Newton Media. (2021). *Volební speciál 3: Značky SPOLU a PirStan se v médiích rychle etablojí*. <https://www.newtonmedia.cz/volebni-special-3-znacky-spolu-a-pirstan-se-v-mediich-rychle-etabloji/>
- Nádvorník, P. (2026, February 6). *Slepence si dělí miliony za volby. Partneri SPD dostanou „drobné“*. Novinky.cz. <https://www.novinky.cz/clanek/domaci-slepence-si-deli-miliony-za-volby-partneri-spd-dostanou-drobné-40561299>
- ODS. (2026, January 18). *Usnesení 32. kongresu ODS*. <https://www.ods.cz/clanek/27985-usnese-ni-32-kongresu-ods>
- Pileček, R. (2022). *Parlamentní volby 2021 z geografické perspektivy. Geografické rozhledy*.
- Pirates. (2025a, June 23). *Memorandum o spolupráci ve volbách do Poslanecké sněmovny PČR 2025*. <https://smlouvy.pirati.cz/contracts/3737>
- Pirates. (2025b). *Nakopneme to! Plán Pirátů, jak posunout Česko dopředu*. https://wiki.pirati.cz/_media/program/volebni/program_piratu_2025.pdf
- Reportér. (2025). *Rajchl nevyloučil, že by jednou mohl nahradit Okamuru: Jak lze chápat jeho kritiku ministra Žůny*. <https://reportermagazin.cz/101410/rajchl-nevyloucil-ze-by-dal-mohl-nahradit-okamuru>
- Schlozman, D. (2015). *When Movements Anchor Parties: Electoral Alignments in American History*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Shugart, M. S., & Carey, J. M. (1992). *Presidents and Assemblies: Constitutional Design and Electoral Dynamics*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Shugart, M. S., & Taagepera, R. (2017). *Votes from seats: Logical models of electoral systems*. Cambridge University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1017/9781108261128>
- Škvrňák, M. (2024). No coalition is an island: How pre-electoral coalitions at the national level shape local elections. *Local Government Studies*, 1–28. <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/03003930.2024.2425751>
- Snyder, G. H. (1997). *Alliance Politics*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press.
- SPD. (2025). *Česko, jaké chcete: Program SPD pro volby do Poslanecké sněmovny 2025*. <https://spd.cz/wp-content/uploads/2025/09/Program-SPD-pro-volby-do-Poslanecke-snemovny-2025.pdf>
- SPOLU. (2025a). *Koaliční smlouva SPOLU*. <https://www.ods.cz/dl/67175/SPOLU-koalici-smlouva-2025.pdf>
- SPOLU. (2025b). *Svoboda & prosperita. I pro budoucí generace*. <https://spolu25.cz/pdf/SPOLU-program-2025.pdf>
- The Constitutional Court of the Czech Republic. (2025). *Constitutional Court has dismissed complaint by Volt Czechia on “undeclared” coalitions*. <https://www.usoud.cz/en/current-affairs/constitutional-court-has-dismissed-complaint-by-volt-czechia-on-undeclared-coalitions>

Tichý, A. (2026, January 11). *Rajchlovo PRO se chce trhnout od Okamury. Alespoň v průzkumech*. Seznam Zprávy. <https://www.seznamzpravy.cz/clanek/domaci-politika-rajchlovo-pro-se-chce-trhnout-od-okamury-295905>

Vartazaryan, G., & Horák, F. (2025). Stačilo! obcházení právní úpravy předvolebních koalic: Analýza současné definice koaličních kandidátních listin pro volby do Poslanecké sněmovny a návrhy de lege ferenda. *Právník*, 6/2025, 507–523.

Voda, P. (2022). Czech Republic: Local elections in a fragmented municipal system. In *The Routledge Handbook of Local Elections and Voting in Europe* (pp. 271–281). London: Routledge.

Voženílková, M. & Šedo, J. (2015). Personalizace volebního systému v návrzích volebních reforem v České republice. *Evropská volební studia*, 10(1), 33–50.

Appendix A:

Political Party and coalition Abbreviation

ANO	ANO 2011
Free Citizens	Svobodní
Greens	Green Party (Strana zelených; Zelení)
KDU-ČSL	former Christian and Democratic Union – Czechoslovak People’s Party (Křesťanská a demokratická unie – Československá strana lidová)
ODS	Civic Democratic Party (Občanská demokratická strana)
Pirates	The Czech Pirate Party or Pirates (Česká pirátská strana)
PIRSTAN	Pirates and Mayors; pre-electoral alliance (Piráti a Starostové)
PRO	Law Respect Expertise (Právo Respekt Odbornost)
SPD	Freedom and Direct Democracy (Svoboda a přímá demokracie)
SPOLU	Together; pre-electoral alliance: ODS, KDU-ČSL, TOP 09
STAČILO!	Stačilo! electoral list (loosely coordinated multi-party electoral cooperation)
STAN	The Mayors and Independents (Starostové a nezávislí)
TOP 09	Tradition Responsibility Prosperity 09 (Tradice odpovědnost prosperita 09)
Tricolour	Trikolóra

Endnotes:

- 1 For the purposes of this study, a strict terminological distinction is adopted. Pre-electoral cooperation is consistently referred to as *pre-electoral alliances* (or simply *alliances*), while post-electoral cooperation, particularly in the form of joint governing arrangements, is referred to as *coalitions*. It should be noted that Czech electoral law uses the term *coalition* to denote formalised pre-electoral cooperation, a classification that carries significant legal consequences. According to Section 49 of the Electoral Act, the electoral threshold is set at 5 % for parties running independently, 8% for coalitions of two parties, and 11% for coalitions of three or more parties (Česko, 2021).
- 2 While this study includes all electorally relevant alliances that achieved parliamentary representation, additional patterns of candidate integration can be observed across other electoral lists. These patterns further illustrate the broader prevalence of hidden forms of pre-electoral coordination in the Czech party system.
- 3 At the same time, several interrelated factors indicate at least a temporarily deeper level of integration among the parties forming the SPOLU alliance. First, the alliance represented a continuation of pre-electoral cooperation established in 2021, which extended beyond the electoral phase to include joint participation in government formation and sustained coordination between parliamentary groups. Second, between 2022 and 2024, SPOLU partners repeatedly coordinated their strategies across other electoral arenas, including presidential, municipal, and European Parliament elections. Third, the parties also acted in a coordinated manner during post-election negotiations following the 2025 parliamentary elections. A significant step towards the possible dissolution of the SPOLU alliance can thus be identified only after the ODS party congress in January 2026, which refrained from endorsing the continuation of the alliance and made no reference to SPOLU in the nomination speech of the newly elected party leader (Kupka, 2026; ODS, 2026). By distinguishing systematically between open and hidden pre-electoral alliances, this study contributes to the comparative literature on coalition strategies in proportional electoral systems with thresholds.