

Financing of political parties in the Czech Republic, draft of the new Act

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Abstract: The financing of political parties and political movements is an issue that has already resonated with Czech society for several electoral terms. Previous governments undertook to adopt legislation that would comprehensively regulate this issue, however due to the lack of an overall compromise these have always been only minor adjustments. In recent years, there has been a loss of confidence in established political parties and movements, leading to the rise of new entities that challenge the existing structure. The non-transparent and often dubious financing of parties, almost zero possibilities for checks, and insignificant penalties for violations of rules, are some of the main reasons for the loss of public confidence. In spite of everything, however, political parties remain the foundation stone of a representative democracy, which is sustainable only if the trust of citizens is retained. The importance of a reform of political financing that would disclose the origin of the funds of the parties and movements has also been shown by pressure being exerted from outside, including a negative evaluation by the Council of Europe Group of States against Corruption (GRECO) and also initiatives of non-profit organisations.

The proposed legislative amendment to Act No 424/1991, on association in political parties and political movements and amendments to electoral laws should ensure greater transparency of the financing of political parties and political movements, especially in the context of their financial and material support by third parties, and a greater level of control over the management of the parties and movements supplemented with a more effective system of penalties. There will be newly introduced expenditure limits on election campaigns, limits for gifts from natural persons and legal entities, and an obligation to finance an election campaign using a so-called transparent account. In accordance with the introduction of new rules for political parties and movements, an independent control body will be established that will newly have available corresponding authority to impose penalties. This body should be the Office for Supervision of the Management of Political Parties and Political Movements, which should effectively react to violations of individual obligations. Even though the issue of configuring an effective system for the financing of political parties is complicated, the bill for an amendment to Act No 424/1991, which has been approved by the government, is an important step forwards in terms of ensuring transparency and fair political competition.

Keywords: Financing of political parties and political movements, transparency, election campaign

Conclusion

This paper by Minister for Human Rights, Equal Opportunities and Legislation, Jiří Dienstbier, focuses on specific aspects of the bill for amendment of Act No 424/1991, on association in political parties and political movements and amendments to electoral laws. The proposed legislation primarily anticipates the regulation of the financing of political parties, which is currently subject to criticism for its lack of transparency. Only minimal rules relating to financing are stipulated in valid laws regulating the issue of political parties, political movements and election campaigns. These are, however, severely lacking in view of the lack of any real threat of any penalties for violating the given rules. The objective of the amended law is primarily to ensure the greatest possible level of transparency of the financing of political parties and political movements.

Sources

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