

Parliamentary opposition and its influence and dividends from the formation and functioning of minority governments in European parliamentary democracies

Artykuł analizuje problematykę wpływu i dywidend opozycji parlamentarnej z procesów tworzenia i funkcjonowania rządów mniejszościowych, w szczególności na przykładzie europejskich demokracji parlamentarnych. Celem badania było sprawdzenie założenia, czy tworzenie i funkcjonowanie rządów mniejszościowych w europejskich demokracjach parlamentarnych jest określone przez alternatywę partii parlamentarnych w wyborze między rządem a opozycją. W tym względzie stwierdzono, że rządy mniejszościowe są wynikiem zarówno spodziewanego wpływu, jak i oczekiwanych dywidend partii opozycyjnych, których wsparcie jest wykorzystywane przy tworzeniu rządów mniejszościowych. Jednocześnie ustalono, że opozycja parlamentarna w perspektywie rządów mniejszościowych ma szczególne, ale nie zawsze jednostronne i decydujące znaczenie, gdyż zarysowane konstrukcje gabinetów w dużej mierze zależą od uwarunkowań instytucjonalnych. Generalnie stwierdzono, że parametry relacji między partiami rządowymi i opozycyjnymi na tle tworzenia rządów mniejszościowych w europejskich demokracjach parlamentarnych są dość ważne, ale kontekst – zależny i zmienny.

Słowa kluczowe: rząd, gabinet rządowy, rząd mniejszościowy, opozycja parlamentarna, partie rządowe i opozycyjne, demokracja parlamentarna.

The article is dedicated to analyzing the issues of the influence and dividends of parliamentary opposition within the processes of minority governments' formation and functioning, in particular on the example of European parliamentary democracies. The aim of the study was to test the assumption that formation and functioning of minority governments in European parliamentary democracies is often outlined by the alternatives of parliamentary parties in the choice between the government and the opposition. In this regard, it was stated that minority governments are a function of both the expected influence and the expected dividends of opposition parties, whose support is used in formation of minority governments. At the same time, it was revealed that parliamentary opposition, especially in the perspective of minority governments, has a superior, but not always unilateral and decisive significance, as the outlined constructions of governments largely depend on institutional determinants. In general, it was found that the parameters of relationship between governmental and oppositional parliamentary parties during the process of minority

governments' formation in European parliamentary democracies are quite important, but context-dependent and variable.

Keywords: *government, governmental cabinet, minority government, parliamentary opposition, governmental and oppositional parties, parliamentary democracy.*

The formation and functioning of minority governments in European parliamentary democracies is often outlined by the alternatives of parliamentary parties in the choice between the government and the opposition. In view of this, minority governments are more often formed when the political-power differential (which is almost always institutionally determined) between the status of the governmental and opposition parties becomes decisive. The fact is that the reason that determines political parties in the event of a choice of government or opposition to choose the latter is due to the availability of opportunities to implement the party course and political and ideological goals of the party, supported by voters. This is fully in line with the paradigm according to which the basic paradigm of European policy is the ability to defend the interests of certain social groups and implement their own party program. This program, i.e. the party's political and ideological goals, can be implemented from the seats of the opposition, and not only from government cabinets. Accordingly, this vision of the political process fits into the logic of interpreting and positioning of the minority government cabinets in European parliamentary democracies, and in both Western and Central and Eastern Europe, not necessarily as scenarios of "crisis and instability." All this actualizes the issue of the influence and dividends of the parliamentary opposition from the processes of formation and functioning of minority governments, in particular on the example of European parliamentary democracies.

These issues are clearly reflected in the practice of inter-institutional and inter-party relations regarding the formation and functioning of minority governments in European countries. In addition, it is quite well represented in the works of scientists, in particular, such as T. Bale and T. Bergman¹, E. Damgaard², C. Green-Pedersen and P. Mortensen³, V. Herman and J. Pope⁴, M. Matilla and T. Raunio⁵, P. Norton⁶,

¹ Bale T., Bergman T., A Taste of Honey Is Worse Than None at All? Coping with the Generic Challenges of Support Party Status in Sweden and New Zealand, *"Party Politics"* 2006, vol 12, nr. 2, s. 189–202.; Bale T., Bergman T., Captives No Longer, but Servants Still? Contract Parliamentarism and the New Minority Governance in Sweden and New Zealand, *"Government and Opposition"* 2006, vol 41, nr. 3, s. 422–449

² Damgaard E., *Parliament and government*, [w:] Esaiasson P., Heidar K. (eds.), *Beyond Westminster and Congress: The Nordic experience*, Wyd. Ohio State University Press 2000, s. 265–280

³ Green-Pedersen C., *The Political Agenda in Denmark: Measurement and Trends since 1953*, Wyd. Aarhus University 2005.; Green-Pedersen C., Mortensen P., Who sets the agenda and who responds to it in the Danish parliament? A new model of issue competition and agenda-setting, *"European Journal of Political Research"* 2010, vol 49, nr. 2, s. 257–281

⁴ Herman V., Pope J., Minority Governments in Western Democracies, *"British Journal of Political Science"* 1973, vol 3, nr. 2, s. 191–212

⁵ Matilla M., Raunio T., Does winning pay? Electoral success and government formation in 15 West European countries, *"European journal of political research"* 2004, vol 43, nr. 2, s. 263–285

⁶ Norton P., Parliamentary Opposition in Old and New Democracies, *"Journal of Legislative Studies"* 2008, vol 14, nr. 1–2, s. 6–19

J. Olsen⁷, S. Otjes and T. Louwse⁸, H. Seeberg and F. Christiansen⁹, K. Strøm¹⁰, G. Thesen¹¹ and many others.

Appealing to the available theoretical and practical manifestations of the operationalization of minority governments in European parliamentary democracies, it has been established that such types of government cabinets are “crisis” only when they come to power in the absence of any parliamentary or legislative majority¹². However, as noted by M. Matilla and T. Raunio¹³, this is almost not typical of the Scandinavian countries, which are often based on the prevalence of minority governments stand out from other European parliamentary democracies and are not positioned and perceived as a crisis. Scholars note that the deviant Scandinavian tendency to form predominantly or very often minority governments is usually, among other things, including institutional and constitutional factors, explained and determined by the powers enjoyed by the parliamentary opposition. The fact is that the powers of the parliamentary opposition are most evident in the fact that minority governments do not focus mainly on their composition and parliamentary representation, but instead on the so-called parliamentary or legislative coalitions (“floor coalitions”), which consist of formally governmental parties, and from formally opposition / non-governmental parties. This means that already at the time of their formation, minority governments are counting on the support of opposition parties, in particular for the passage of government bills in parliament. Accordingly, the position that in some countries the frequency of minority government formation directly depends on the “force” of the potential influence of the parliamentary opposition on the activities and policies of government cabinets is appropriate. This is understandable given the statistical fact that minority governments in some countries, in particular Italy, Denmark, Sweden, Norway, and to a lesser extent Finland and Iceland, in some countries, in particular Italy, Denmark, Sweden, Norway, and to a lesser extent Finland and Iceland, are more likely to be formed when the parliamentary opposition is more influential (institutionally and politically). That is why the growing powers of the parliamentary opposition in parliamentary democracies increase the “attractiveness” of the idea of political parties not to form government cabinets and not to join them, which may explain the high frequency and duration of minority

⁷ Olsen J., *Organized Democracy: Political Institutions in a Welfare State – The Case of Norway*, Wyd. Universitetsforlaget 1983

⁸ Otjes S., Louwse T., A Special Majority Cabinet? Supported Minority Governance and Parliamentary Behaviour in the Netherlands, *“World Political Science Review”* 2014, vol 10, nr. 2, s. 343–363

⁹ Seeberg H., Christiansen F., *Government and opposition in issue competition: Legislative agreements as a trade of criticism for policy*, Prepared for the 22nd annual IPSA Conference, Madrid, July 8–12, 2012

¹⁰ Strøm K., A Behavioral Theory of Competitive Political Parties, *“American Journal of Political Science”* 1990, vol 34, nr. 2, s. 565–598.; Strøm K., Deferred Gratification and Minority Governments in Scandinavia, *“Legislative Studies Quarterly”* 1986, vol 11, nr. 4, s. 583–605; Strøm K., *Minority Government and Majority Rule*, Wyd. Cambridge University Press 1990; Strøm K., Minority Governments in Parliamentary Democracies: The Rationality of Non-winning Cabinet Solutions, *“Comparative political Studies”* 1984, vol 17, nr. 2, s. 199–226.; Strøm K., *Parliamentary government and legislative organization*, [w:] Döring H. (ed.), *Parliaments and Majority Rule in Western Europe*, Wyd. St Martin's Press 1995, s. 51–82

¹¹ Thesen G., *Making and shaking government? External support parties as political agenda-setters*, Wyd. International Research Institute of Stavanger 2011.; Thesen G., When good news is scarce and bad news is good: Government responsibilities and opposition possibilities in political agenda-setting, *“European Journal of Political Research”* 2013, vol 52, nr. 3, s. 364–389.

¹² Taylor M., Herman V., Party Systems and Government Stability, *“American Political Science Review”* 1971, vol 65, nr. 1, s. 31.

¹³ Matilla M., Raunio T., Does winning pay? Electoral success and government formation in 15 West European countries, *“European journal of political research”* 2004, vol 43, nr. 2, s. 270–271

governments in some European countries. According to some researchers¹⁴, this is further facilitated by the relationship of close inter-party cooperation, especially within the legislatures, and therefore the outlined conclusion largely blurs the traditional differences between the government cabinet and the parliamentary opposition in parliamentary democracies.

Explaining the empirical logic of the influence of the “force” of the parliamentary opposition on the frequency of formation of minority governments in European parliamentary democracies, K. Strom notes that the political-power differential between the status of government and opposition party concerns the differentiation of parliament¹⁵. Against this background, it is worth distinguishing between two forms of differentiation of parliamentary roles that affect the different prospects of opposition parties – hierarchization and specialization. Legislatures with a low degree (level) of hierarchy and a high degree (level) of specialization usually contribute to the influence of opposition parliamentary parties. Because government parties traditionally control the “command heights of parliament¹⁶”, hierarchical mechanisms within parliaments facilitate the dominance of government parties over the opposition ones. At the same time, however, a high level of specialization within parliaments strengthens them and the legislature in general as opposed to governments and the executive, making the correlation between government and opposition more significant and structured.

This conclusion of K. Strom is relevant because all national legislatures of European parliamentary democracies are structurally hierarchical. However, a special place among them is occupied by the Scandinavian parliaments, which are structured on the principles of equality, informality and “moderation”, on the basis of which hierarchy as a form of differentiation of parliamentary roles is less pronounced than in parliaments of other European countries. The fact is that discrimination between parties in the Scandinavian parliaments is limited, and therefore they have little or no distinction between government and opposition political forces. And this, as, for example, in the Norwegian Storting (parliament), is the reason that deputies at sittings are physically placed after the districts, instead of after fractions, despite the fact that all positions between parties in parliament distribute strictly proportional. In addition, committees and other parliamentary staff are non-partisan, and the time for speeches in parliament is distributed in proportion to the force / representation of the parties in the legislature, whether governmental or oppositional. According to B. Rush¹⁷ and J. Olsen¹⁸, in the case of Norway, the peculiarities of the hierarchization of the parliament are utmost noticeable in the so-called Council of Presidents and the functioning of meetings of parliamentary factions. These are the

¹⁴ Damgaard E., *Parliament and government*, [w:] E. Saastad, P. Heidar K. (eds.), *Beyond Westminster and Congress: The Nordic experience*, Wyd. Ohio State University Press 2000, s. 265–280.; Arter D., *Scandinavian politics today*, Wyd. Manchester University Press 1999, s. 200–244

¹⁵ Strom K., Deferred Gratification and Minority Governments in Scandinavia, *“Legislative Studies Quarterly”* 1986, vol 11, nr. 4, s. 591–592

¹⁶ Strom K., Deferred Gratification and Minority Governments in Scandinavia, *“Legislative Studies Quarterly”* 1986, vol 11, nr. 4, s. 591

¹⁷ Rasch B., Stortingets Uformelle avstemningsregler, *“Tidsskrift for samfunnsforskning”* 1983, vol 24, s. 221–242

¹⁸ Olsen J., *Organized Democracy: Political Institutions in a Welfare State – The Case of Norway*, Wyd. Universitetsforlaget 1983, s. 58.

structures that unite the work of the parliament and support the government. Thus, the Council of Presidents of Norway consists of six persons (speakers), who are three pairs (presidents and vice-presidents), represented by parties on the basis of proportional consideration of the “force” of the representation of the largest of them. Each of the pairs of presidents (or speakers) of the parliament rotates leading powers in the legislature monthly. However, it is as a result that the weakly hierarchical Council of Presidents plays a minor role in the Norwegian parliament’s political decisions, so it is not a mechanism for the government cabinet and government parties to dominate the parliamentary opposition. The situation is similar for other Scandinavian countries, even though the speakers of their parliaments (especially in Sweden) play a key role in the negotiations leading up to the formation of government cabinets¹⁹.

As for the meetings of the factions of the parliamentary parties, they are also rather weakly hierarchized in the Scandinavian countries, although they are more important hierarchical components of the parliaments than the leadership of the parliaments. The fact is that the Scandinavian parties are very disciplined, and therefore the cohesion of parliaments is very tangible²⁰. Therefore, according to G. Hernes²¹, deputies of national parliaments of different Scandinavian countries can usually initiate only legislative issues that concern the interests of their constituencies and freedom of conscience. It should also be noted that the leaders of parliamentary parties are endowed with a number of “sanctions” against some members of their factions. The latter, for example, may not be represented in certain parliamentary committees. Instead, everything, including the issue of the party’s course on certain issues of state development, is decided by party leaders and meetings in parliaments. Based on this and the tradition of consensual decision-making in the Scandinavian countries, it is obvious that all or most of the issues and problems of the majority in the legislature are accommodated and / or settled by the parliamentary minority²².

At the same time, in order for opposition parties to be influential in the context of the functioning of government cabinets, in particular minorities, it is critical for them that parliamentary rules and procedures be hierarchical in terms of systematic discrimination against them. Returning to the Scandinavian countries, for example, such discrimination is found to be substantially limited, as a fair distribution of positions, rules and procedures between government and opposition parties is maintained at virtually every level and in every aspect of parliamentary activity. For example, each Norwegian MP is given a position in only one standing committee of parliament, and each committee is formed as much as possible on a proportional basis. The situation is similar for other, not necessarily Scandinavian, countries, including Greece, Estonia,

¹⁹ Arter D., *The Nordic Parliaments: A Comparative Analysis*, Wyd. Hurst 1984, s. 147

²⁰ Bjurulf B., Glans I., *Fran tvablockssystem till fraktionalisering. Partigrupper och ledamoters rostning i norska stortinget 1969–1974*, “*Statsvetenskaplig Tidskrift*” 1976, vol 3, s. 231–252

²¹ Hernes G., *Interest, Influence and Cooptation: A Study of the Norwegian Parliament*, Wyd. Johns Hopkins University 1971

²² Strøm K., *Deferred Gratification and Minority Governments in Scandinavia*, “*Legislative Studies Quarterly*” 1986, vol 11, nr. 4, s. 592

Iceland, Italy, Lithuania, Malta, Portugal, Romania, Hungary, France and Sweden²³. However, not all of them are dominated or formed by minority governments at all. On the one hand, minority government cabinets are often formed or have been formed in Italy, which has had a so-called Legislative Committee since 1997, consisting of ten deputies – five from the majority (government parties) and five from the minority (opposition parties). A similar situation among Central and Eastern European countries is observed in Slovenia, where all committees are formed on a proportional basis, i.e. taking into account the party-political configuration of the lower house of parliament (shares of parliamentary parties), and in the Public Finance Control Committee and the oversight of the intelligence and security services, the vast majority of seats are made up of members of opposition parliamentary groups.

On the other hand, minority governments are not very or not at all typical of countries such as Austria, Luxembourg, Malta, Germany, Serbia, the United Kingdom and Hungary, where the powers of the parliamentary opposition are very important. For example, in Hungary, despite the proportional distribution of members of most standing committees between parties, some standing committees are formed on the basis of the principle of parity, i.e. the number of members from government parties is equal to the number of members from the opposition parties. In addition, the country stipulates that the National Security Committee (by law) and the Audit and Budget Committee (by political agreement) must be headed by members of opposition parties, although minority governments are almost non-existent. A similar situation with the absence of minority governments is typical for Montenegro, which clearly stipulates that the chairman and deputy chairman of a standing committee may not simultaneously represent only governmental or only opposition parliamentary parties.

In this regard, it is established that the relative lack of hierarchy between the parties and their representatives / deputies is manifested in other relations as well. Minority governments are much more often, again on the example of the Scandinavian countries, formed / supported by so-called “working parliaments”, in which little attention is paid to the speeches of unsurpassed speakers or experienced politicians. Or, in other words, minority governments are more often formed as institutional consequences of parliaments that are poorly differentiated and hierarchical on the basis of the principles of individuality. Accordingly, minority governments are more likely to have political systems that have few “senior” and experienced MPs in their parliaments (despite the likely respectable age of parliamentarism and long life expectancy in a country). Thus, it is generally stated that minority government cabinets are much more common in European parliamentary democracies, where parliaments have relatively “flat and non-hierarchically structured structures”²⁴. After all, egalitarianism and informality are common in this case, as a result of which opposition parliamentary parties do not experience systemic

²³ Arter D., *The Nordic Parliaments: A Comparative Analysis*, Wyd. Hurst 1984, s. 191.; Strøm K., Deferred Gratification and Minority Governments in Scandinavia, *Legislative Studies Quarterly* 1986, vol 11, nr. 4, s. 592

²⁴ Strøm K., Deferred Gratification and Minority Governments in Scandinavia, *Legislative Studies Quarterly* 1986, vol 11, nr. 4, s. 583–605

discrimination in resource allocation procedures. Even though parliamentary faction meetings are central decision-making arenas and party discipline is high, relations between government and opposition parties, i.e. between government and opposition, are usually close / sincere, and significant inter-party conflicts are impossible, including at the plenary sessions of parliaments. Such situations provide favorable conditions for the legislative influence of opposition parties. This necessarily means that opposition parties are “thriving” in a functionally differentiated and specialized parliamentary environment.

It is important that without specialization parliaments are unable to function as effective tools for scrutinizing and holding back government cabinets and bureaucracies. In addition, it is much more difficult for the government cabinet and the leadership of the parliament to control the decentralized discussion process, which actually accompanies specialization. Accordingly, specialized standing committees of parliaments, given their very variable attributes, form completely alternative sources of knowledge, information and identification. This is important given the fact that, as established by a number of scholars, minority government cabinets are more often formed in the absence of reliable information, in particular on the adoption of expected regulations and bylaws. Another aspect that, in the context of the specialization of parliaments, affects the frequency of formation of minority governments concerns consensus-oriented decision-making by legislature committees. The fact is that minority governments are formed more often when the laws and regulations of parliaments provide for closed rather than open meetings of parliamentary committees. If decisions are made in this way in committees, they are almost always made in plenary sessions of legislatures, and this, provided that the previous requirements are met, contributes to the formation of minority governments for institutional and party reasons. Therefore, K. Strom²⁵ emphasizes that minority governments should more often be formed in those political systems in which the work of standing parliamentary committees is organized in such a way as to promote specialization and cooperation between government and opposition parties, i.e. between the expected and the current government and the opposition. At the same time, one cannot ignore the factors that significantly limit parliamentary specialization, in particular the significant parliamentary variability and change in the successive legislatures of deputies and parties, as well as the change of membership in parliamentary committees by deputies. These factors and the low level of professionalism of parliamentarians create even greater priorities and advantages for opposition parties, and therefore they contribute to the formation of minority governments. In view of this, it has been established that taking into account the committees of legislatures, in particular their institutional and quantitative attributes, is of relative importance in determining the influence of the parliamentary opposition on the frequency of formation and functioning of minority governments in European democracies. Instead, the influence of such attributes of parliamentary

²⁵ Strom K., *Deferred Gratification and Minority Governments in Scandinavia*, “*Legislative Studies Quarterly*” 1986, vol 11, nr. 4, s. 583–605

committees as their strength and specificity is brighter and more tangible²⁶. In general, it is generally believed that systems of strong parliamentary committees (for example, in Ireland, Iceland, Italy, Latvia, Norway, Portugal, and to a lesser extent in Denmark, Spain and Sweden) help to strengthen parliamentary opposition, which in total increases parliamentary influence. committees and parliamentary opposition to government activities and policies. Accordingly, it is in this case that minority governments should be formed much more often.

However, in the context of defining the role of the parliamentary opposition in the formation and functioning of minority governments in European parliamentary democracies, the question of the “benefits” and dividends received by the opposition parties themselves remains open. The fact is that such parties deliberately refuse to pursue their power goals. However, according to researchers²⁷, this does not mean that opposition parties do not achieve political, ideological and electoral goals. In addition, scholars²⁸ argue that opposition parties, especially in opposition to minority governments, have several tools to influence the political process, including the agenda of legislatures in their competition with the executive authorities. For example, as S. Soroka notes, opposition parliamentary parties, based on their negative bias through the media, can significantly politicize the issues and problems of the weakness of minority governments²⁹. This is especially evident when there are minority government offices for which there is too little “good news” in the media. Thus, through the media, opposition parliamentary parties, in contrast to government parties minorities are capable of achieving more political-ideological and electoral goals³⁰. This occurs as opposition parties in this context have a greater opportunity to constantly focus on issues that benefit them exclusively, and government parties must respond to issues raised by the agenda of existing party systems. Thus, without controlling the agenda of party systems, opposition parties of the legislature can force government cabinets to act to address specific issues addressed to them³¹. This shows that party reactions to news in the media play an extremely important role in the competition between the government cabinet and the parliamentary opposition in a parliamentary democracy³². While the cabinet responds to good news in the media, including news that reflects a positive

²⁶ Strøm K., *Parliamentary government and legislative organization*, [w:] Döring H. (ed.), *Parliaments and Majority Rule in Western Europe*, Wyd. St Martin's Press 1995, s. 51–82

²⁷ Bale T., Dann C., Is the Grass Really Greener? The Rationale and Reality of Support Party Status: A New Zealand Case Study, *Party Politics* 2002, vol 8, nr. 3, s. 350

²⁸ Green-Pedersen C., Mortensen P., Who sets the agenda and who responds to it in the Danish parliament? A new model of issue competition and agenda-setting, *European Journal of Political Research* 2010, vol 49, nr. 2, s. 257–281.; Thesen G., When good news is scarce and bad news is good: Government responsibilities and opposition possibilities in political agenda-setting, *European Journal of Political Research* 2013, vol 52, nr. 3, s. 364–389

²⁹ Soroka S., The Gatekeeping Function: Distributions of Information in the Media and the Real World, *Journal of Politics* 2012, vol 74, nr. 2, s. 514–528

³⁰ Thesen G., When good news is scarce and bad news is good: Government responsibilities and opposition possibilities in political agenda-setting, *European Journal of Political Research* 2013, vol 52, nr. 3, s. 364–389

³¹ Green-Pedersen C., Mortensen P., Who sets the agenda and who responds to it in the Danish parliament? A new model of issue competition and agenda-setting, *European Journal of Political Research* 2010, vol 49, nr. 2, s. 273

³² Thesen G., *Making and shaking government? External support parties as political agenda-setters*, Wyd. International Research Institute of Stavanger 2011, s. 4

solution to existing social problems, opposition parties use bad news to criticize the government cabinet and focus mainly on its incompetence. In this case, the “skew” of news in the media almost always works mainly in favour of opposition political forces. That is why, without being governmental, they are able to achieve their own political and ideological goals through minority governments and government parties, and without the participation of minority governments – their electoral goal.

Therefore, the statement of K. Strom is quite correct, who notes that the direct difference between parties in the government cabinet and parties outside the government cabinet in many multi-party democratic systems is not always equal to the difference between parties with influence and without influence and responsibility³³. This is especially true of parliamentary democracies, which have traditionally formed minority governments, including Denmark, Sweden, Norway, Spain and Romania, and previously Italy. For most of them, it was or is the minority government cabinets that operate in an influential parliamentary opposition³⁴. This confirms that minority governments and their periods of operation, and therefore their “viability and effectiveness”, are possible only through various types of arrangements to support minority governments between the minority governments themselves and the various opposition parties in the legislature. These agreements can be informal (oral) or formal (written). They may concern some or all of the activities of minority government cabinets and the political and ideological goals of opposition parliamentary parties³⁵.

With this in mind, T. Bale and T. Bergman note that in countries where minority government cabinets often take place, agreements between opposition and government parties on the specifics of the functioning of such cabinets and the political and ideological goals of governmental and non-governmental parties can be constructed on the basis of strictly institutionalized rules, which in political science are referred to as “contract parliamentarism”³⁶. It outlines the situation in which a governmental (coalition or one-party) minority cabinet has formal written arrangements with one or more non-governmental / opposition parties. The essence of such agreements is that non-governmental / opposition parties support the minority government, while the minority government assists non-governmental / opposition parties in achieving their political and ideological goals. In addition, “contract parliamentarism” can fulfill the power goals of opposition parties, because on the basis of agreements with government parties, opposition political forces can generally be endowed with positions in the executive branch. The practice of “contract parliamentarism” is typical for Sweden, and to a lesser extent for Denmark and Norway.

³³ Strom K., *Minority Government and Majority Rule*, Wyd. Cambridge University Press 1990, s. 42.

³⁴ Gallagher K., Laver K., Mair P., *Representative Government in Modern Europe: Institutions, Parties, and Governments*, Wyd. McGraw-Hill 2005, s. 388–391

³⁵ Powell B., *Contemporary Democracies: Participation, Stability, and Violence*, Cambridge 1982, s. 143.

³⁶ Bale T., Bergman T., Captives No Longer, but Servants Still? Contract Parliamentarism and the New Minority Governance in Sweden and New Zealand, “*Government and Opposition*” 2006, vol 41, nr. 3, s. 422–449

A somewhat different type of agreement between government and opposition parties is the so-called “externally supported government offices” (externally supported cabinets), which theoretically singled out K. Strom³⁷. They are based on advance (even before the formation of the Government) stipulated, comprehensive and clear (not necessarily written) arrangements, which guarantee the support of the opposition parties to minority governments, and can be traced or previously traced, for example, in Italy, France, Finland, Czech Republic, Slovenia, less-in Denmark and Norway. These agreements are often referred to as the “negotiating parliamentarism” (negotiating parliamentarism)³⁸. Finally, sometimes, notably in Central and Eastern Europe, government minority offices have a place on the basis of exceptionally informal and unwritten agreements and arrangements. However, support guaranteed by such agreements can be both consistent and situational³⁹.

In this context, it is important to note that the prospects of opposition parties from not participating in the formation and functioning of minority government cabinets, as well as the prospects for minority governments to take into account the goals of opposition parties, depend on the governmental and formative potential of these opposition parties. If they are treated as hypothetical components of alternative government coalitions, then their potential and expected prospects in terms of ensuring political and ideological goals by minority governments increase. If the opposition parties are not treated as hypothetical components of alternative government coalitions, then their potential to embody their own political and ideological goals is significantly limited⁴⁰.

That is why the strategies of relations between governmental and opposition parties under the conditions of functioning of minority governments are different. The first strategy, or so-called support party bonus strategy, provides that opposition parties that remain outside government cabinets (including minorities) have a better chance of avoiding the “position effect”, which is reflected in the form of a decrease in the electoral popularity of parties that were government before the election. In this regard, the researchers argue that the expected electoral costs of government (ie from participation in the formation and operation of government offices) are relevant to the decision not to govern (ie non-participation in the formation and operation of government offices)⁴¹. Therefore, when testing such a strategy, opposition parliamentary parties usually criticize government parliamentary parties and their government cabinets in every possible way, as expected to increase their electoral preferences, but formally

³⁷ Strom K., *Minority Government and Majority Rule*, Wyd. Cambridge University Press 1990, s. 61–62

³⁸ Sannerstedt A., *Negotiations in the Riksdag*, [w:] Stenelo L.-G., Jerneck M. (eds.), *The Bargaining Democracy*, Wyd. Lund University Press 1996, s. 17–58; Mattson I., *Förhandlingsparlamentarism. En jämförande studie av Riksdagen och Folketinget*, Wyd. Lund University Press 1996

³⁹ Herman V., Pope J., *Minority Governments in Western Democracies*, “*British Journal of Political Science*” 1973, vol 3, nr. 2, s. 191–212

⁴⁰ Lijphart A., *Patterns of Democracy: Government Forms and Performance in Thirty-Six Countries*, Wyd. Yale University Press 1999, s. 104

⁴¹ Rose R., Mackie T., *Incumbency in Government: Asset or Liability?*, [w:] Daalder H., Mair P. (eds.), *Western European Party Systems: Continuity and Change*, Wyd. Sage Publications 1983; Narud H., Valen H., *Coalition Membership and Electoral Performance*, [w:] Strom K., Müller W., Bergman T. (eds.), *Cabinets and Coalition Bargaining: The Democratic Life Cycle in Western Europe*, Wyd. Oxford University Press 2008, s. 369–402

or informally remain parties supporting such government cabinets (especially minority governments). Instead, the second strategy, or the so-called support party trade-off strategy, stipulates that opposition political forces that remain outside government cabinets (including minorities) “share” political responsibility for their activities with government parties governments, and therefore not very or not at all critical of government cabinets. The point is that, according to the outlined strategy, opposition parties fear that their criticism of government cabinets (including minorities) will undermine the reputation of constructive cooperation between the government and the opposition, leading to a loss of electoral support for government and opposition political forces⁴².

In addition, in the perspective of the opposition parliamentary parties not to participate in the formation and functioning of minority governments, the remarks of G. Sieberg and F. Christiansen⁴³ that minority governments through non-governmental / oppositional political parties propose non-governmental / opposition political parties influence in exchange for avoiding criticism of minority government cabinets by the parliamentary opposition. In fact, in this case, the legally oriented agreements of the minority and opposition governments, ie the governmental and opposition parties have the format of bargaining and negotiations. They aim to make the parliamentary opposition as co-responsible as possible for the political policies of governments minority, which is why to limit the ability of opposition parties to criticize minority governments⁴⁴. This is most true of European parliamentary democracies, which are examples of “contract parliamentarism” systems, in particular for Sweden and Denmark, and less so for Norway⁴⁵. In addition, in this case, cooperation between government and opposition parties is mutually beneficial, as the advantages and miscalculations of it take into account both government and opposition political forces⁴⁶ (especially when political parties are relatively proportionate and agreements between them are “broad”). However, they are still largely taken into account by government parties and their government cabinets, which consider various types of arrangements with opposition parties to be necessary for the adoption of government bills in the legislature. Accordingly, the interpretations of J. Buchanan and G. Tallock⁴⁷, K. Shepsl and B. Weingast⁴⁸, R. Klemmensen and S. Norgaard⁴⁹ are appropriate in this context, which indicate that the “income from bargaining” of minority governments with opposition parties is the formation and support for legislative institutions that help political representatives with different interests to achieve individual goals. As a result, opposition parties

⁴² Bale T., Bergman T., A Taste of Honey Is Worse Than None at All? Coping with the Generic Challenges of Support Party Status in Sweden and New Zealand, *Party Politics* 2006, vol 12, nr. 2, s. 206

⁴³ Seeberg H., Christiansen F., *Government and opposition in issue competition: Legislative agreements as a trade of criticism for policy*, Prepared for the 22nd annual IPSA Conference, Madrid, July 8–12,

⁴⁴ Green-Pedersen C., *The Political Agenda in Denmark: Measurement and Trends since 1953*, Wyd. Aarhus University 2005

⁴⁵ Klemmensen R., Forlig i det danske Folketing 1953–2005, *Politica* 2005, vol 37, nr. 4, s. 440–452

⁴⁶ Christiansen F., *Politiske forlig i Folketinget*, Wyd. Aarhus University Press 2008

⁴⁷ Buchanan J., Tullock G., *The calculus of consent*, Wyd. The university of Michigan Press 1962

⁴⁸ Shepsle K., Weingast B., *Positive Theories of Congressional Institutions*, Wyd. University of Michigan Press 1995.

⁴⁹ Norgaard S., Klemmensen R., Hvorfor stemmer oppositionen for regeringens lovforslag?, *Politica* 2009, vol 41, nr. 1, s. 68–91

are able to work with minority governments to agree on public policies, that is, they are able to assist them in governing⁵⁰.

In the context of minority governments in European parliamentary democracies, this is particularly evident in the fact that it is the opposition parties that are effective in controlling and influencing the legislative agenda⁵¹. As a result, researchers often note that minority government offices “do what the opposition says”⁵². In addition, governments agree on such an agenda, because if the politicization of the parliamentary opposition is not stopped, it will negatively affect the electoral prospects of government parties⁵³. The fact is that opposition parliamentary parties are fairly well aware of the vulnerabilities of government cabinets, especially minority government cabinets⁵⁴. Therefore, all successful politicians also instinctively understand which issues and problems benefit them and their parties and which issues and problems do not. So the trick is to politicize the former and depoliticize the latter. However, in the context of the outlined conclusions, it is clear that the parliamentary opposition may or may not address issues that benefit minority governments: it all depends to a large extent on the goals (including government-forming) of opposition parties and their relationship with government parties. Accordingly, the opposition and opposition parties may or may not abandon the strategy that they do not win the election, but force the government and government parties to lose⁵⁵.

In summary, this means that in the case of minority governments in parliamentary democracies (especially those where minority governments are formed on a regular basis), arrangements between governmental and opposition parties tend to give rise to political positions of the parliamentary opposition that are too difficult for government parties to abandon⁵⁶. The fact is that minority governments themselves still have only two strategies to “reserve their stability” – to rely on external support (non-governmental / opposition parties to support minority governments) or to negotiate “friendly restraint” of non-governmental / opposition parties⁵⁷. According to K. Strom, minority governments that rely on external support are “disguised majority governments.” Instead, minority government cabinets, which agree on the “friendly restraint” of non-governmental / opposition parties in providing legislative support for certain issues of government are de facto minority governments⁵⁸. In other words, minority govern-

⁵⁰ Norton P., Parliamentary Opposition in Old and New Democracies, *Journal of Legislative Studies* 2008, vol 14, nr. 1–2, s. 6–19

⁵¹ Green-Pedersen C., Mortensen P., Who sets the agenda and who responds to it in the Danish parliament? A new model of issue competition and agenda-setting, *European Journal of Political Research* 2010, vol 49, nr. 2, s. 257–281.

⁵² Seeberg H., Christiansen F., *Government and opposition in issue competition: Legislative agreements as a trade of criticism for policy*, Prepared for the 22nd annual IPSA Conference, Madrid, July 8–12, 2012.

⁵³ Green J., The dynamics of issue competence and vote for parties in and out of power: an analysis of valence in Britain, 1979–1997, *European Journal of Political Research* 2011, vol 51, nr. 4, s. 469–503.; Robertson D., *A theory of party competition*, Wyd. Wiley 1976.; Riker W., *The Strategy of Rhetoric: Campaigning for the American Constitution*, Wyd. Yale University Press 1996

⁵⁴ Carmines E., The Logic of Party Alignment, *Journal of Theoretical Politics* 1991, vol 3, nr. 1, s. 75.

⁵⁵ Norris P., Apathetic Landslide: the 2001 British General Election, *Parliamentary Affairs* 2001, vol 54, nr. 1, s. 576

⁵⁶ Strom K., A Behavioral Theory of Competitive Political Parties, *American Journal of Political Science* 1990, vol 34, nr. 2, s. 565–598

⁵⁷ Russo F., *Two steps forward and one step back: the majority principle in the Italian Parliament since 1994*, Paper prepared for the SISP annual conference, University of Perugia, September 11–13, 2014, s. 14

⁵⁸ Strom K., *Minority Government and Majority Rule*, Wyd. Cambridge University Press 1990

ments that rely on stable external support from opposition parliamentary parties are so-called supported minority governments. Instead, such minority governments that rely on situational (ad hoc) external support from opposition parties or their “friendly restraint” are so-called unsupported minority governments⁵⁹.

However, even so, Strom notes that in a trivial sense, all minority governments rely on external support, as they, having a minority in the context of government parliamentary parties in the legislature, are obliged to receive votes of support from non-governmental (opposition) parties, in particular for beginning to perform their duties and adopt their own bills in the legislature. Thus, the scholar proposes a more substantial definition of external support for minority government cabinets, which is based on the separation of two types of such government cabinets – “formal” and “substantial” (“substantivized”)⁶⁰. On this basis, Strom argues that a minority government should be classified as “externally supported” only if it enjoys the parliamentary support of any party that is not represented in the government cabinet, but always provided that the support of such a party: was determined and agreed before the formation of the minority government; takes the form of a clear, comprehensive, and more than short-term commitment to government policy and “survival.” This position of delineating “external support” is critical given that minority governments are a priori the result of two counts. First, any relevant / substantial parliamentary party has short- and long-term goals that may conflict with each other. Therefore, one or another party, formally supporting the government cabinet of the minority, must realize and take this into account. Secondly, any relevant / substantial parliamentary party a priori wants to influence the political process, but it can do so by gaining power, as well as by participating in legislative activities.

Therefore, each party, supporting the minority government cabinet, must understand this situation. Taking these points into account by hypothetical non-governmental parties directly affects the possibility of forming “formal” or “externally supported” minority government cabinets. This means that “formal” or “externally supported” minority governments, as opposed to “substantial” or “substantivized” minority governments, are always the result of rational calculations by parties as to whether they can achieve their own goals and interests outside government cabinets⁶¹. A. Lijphart⁶² takes a somewhat controversial position, pointing out that both the first and second types of minority governments (based on the different nature of support or “restraint” of opposition parties) should be defined for theoretical and practical reasons as “oversized” types of majorities. Especially since the commitments of “external support” parties in minority government cabinets are never as strong as with the participation of

⁵⁹ Strom K., *Minority Governments in Parliamentary Democracies: The Rationality of Non-winning Cabinet Solutions*, “Comparative Political Studies” 1984, vol 17, nr. 2, s. 199–226.; Bale T., Bergman T., *Captives No Longer, but Servants Still? Contract Parliamentarism and the New Minority Governance in Sweden and New Zealand*, “*Government and Opposition*” 2006, vol 41, nr. 3, s. 422–449

⁶⁰ Strom K., *Minority Government and Majority Rule*, Wyd. Cambridge University Press 1990

⁶¹ Robert A., *Demythologizing the Czech opposition agreement*, “*Europe-Asia Studies*” 2003, vol 55, nr. 8, s. 1278.

⁶² Lijphart A., *Patterns of Democracy: Government Forms and Performance in Thirty-Six Countries*, Wyd. Yale University Press 1999

“external support” parties directly in government cabinets. However, in one case or another, in the periods of formation and functioning of majority government cabinets, inter-party divisions and conflicts between the status of the governmental and coalition parties are greater than in periods of formation and functioning of minority governments⁶³. Accordingly, in the perspective of minority governments, the parliamentary opposition has a special, though not unilateral, influence.

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⁶³ Otjes S., Louwse T., A Special Majority Cabinet? Supported Minority Governance and Parliamentary Behaviour in the Netherlands, *“World Political Science Review”* 2014, vol 10, nr. 2, s. 343–363

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