

IMPORTANCE AND INFLUENCE OF PARLIAMENTARY COMMITTEES IN THE CONDITIONS OF MINORITY GOVERNMENTS' FUNCTIONING: THEORIZING AND FINDINGS IN THE COUNTRIES OF CENTRAL AND EASTERN EUROPE

The article analyzes the importance and influence of parliamentary committees in the conditions of minority governments at the theoretical level and empirically, in particular in the countries of Central and Eastern Europe. The author assumes that the legitimate mechanism of people's representation in countries of this type is the parliamentary method of government formation and responsibility. Therefore, governmental cabinets, including minority ones, depend on party composition of parliaments in their formation, functioning and responsibility. It was suggested that the frequency of minority governments' formation is additionally determined by the specialization of parliaments, in particular through the prism of parliamentary committees as an arena of government-opposition relations, where the opposition almost always prevails in the case of minority governments. However, it was analytically proved that the committees themselves, in particular their various attributes and "power", do not or almost do not affect the frequency of minority governments' formation in the countries of Central and Eastern Europe. At the same time, the strengthening of committees can serve to strengthen parliamentary opposition, which contributes to the increase in frequency of minority governments' formation.

Keywords: government, minority government, parliament, committee, countries of Central and Eastern Europe.

ZNACZENIE I WPŁYW KOMISJI PARLAMENTARNYCH W WARUNKACH FUNKCJONOWANIA RZĄDÓW MNIEJSZOŚCIOWYCH: TEORIA I USTALENIA W KRAJACH EUROPY ŚRODKOWO-WSCHODNIEJ

Artykuł analizuje znaczenie i wpływ komisji parlamentarnych w warunkach rządów mniejszościowych na poziomie teoretycznym i empirycznie, w szczególności w krajach Europy Środkowo-Wschodniej. Autorka przyjmuje, że prawomocnym mechanizmem reprezentacji społeczeństwa w państwach tego typu jest parlamentarna metoda tworzenia rządu i odpowiedzialności. Dlatego gabinety rządowe, w tym mniejszościowe, na etapie tworzenia, w trakcie funkcjonowania i odpowiedzialności zależą od składu partyjnego parlamentów. Sugeruje się, że o częstotliwości powstawania rządów mniejszościowych decyduje dodatkowo specjalizacja

parlamentów, w szczególności przez pryzmat komisji parlamentarnych jako areny relacji rząd-opozycja, gdzie w przypadku rządów mniejszościowych prawie zawsze przeważa opozycja. Udowodniono jednak analitycznie, że same komisje, w szczególności ich różne atrybuty i „moc”, nie wpływają lub prawie nie wpływają na częstotliwość powstawania rządów mniejszościowych w krajach Europy Środkowo-Wschodniej. Jednocześnie wzmocnienie komitetów może służyć wzmocnieniu opozycji parlamentarnej, co przyczynia się do wzrostu częstotliwości powstawania rządów mniejszościowych.

Słowa kluczowe: rząd, rząd mniejszościowy, parlament, komisja, kraje Europy Środkowo-Wschodniej.

ЗНАЧЕННЯ ТА ВПЛИВ ПАРЛАМЕНТСЬКИХ КОМІТЕТІВ В УМОВАХ ФУНКЦІОНУВАННЯ УРЯДІВ МЕНШОСТІ: ТЕОРЕТИЗАЦІЯ ТА ВИЯВИ У КРАЇНАХ ЦЕНТРАЛЬНО-СХІДНОЇ ЄВРОПИ

У статті на теоретичному рівні й емпірично, зокрема в країнах Центрально-Східної Європи, проаналізовано значення та вплив парламентських комітетів в умовах урядів меншості. Автор виходить з того, що легітимним механізмом народного представництва в країнах подібного типу є парламентський спосіб формування та відповідальності уряду. Тому урядові кабінети, в тому числі меншості, в своєму формуванні, функціонуванні і відповідальності залежать від партійного складу парламентів. Висунуто припущення, що частота формування урядів меншості додатково зумовлена спеціалізацією парламентів, зокрема крізь призму парламентських комітетів як арили урядово-опозиційних відносин, де в разі урядів меншості майже завжди переважає саме опозиція. Однак аналітично доведено, що комітети самі по собі, зокрема різні їхні атрибути та «сила», не впливають чи майже не впливають на частоту формування урядів меншості в країнах Центрально-Східної Європи. Разом із цим, посилення парламентських комітетів може слугувати посиленню парламентської опозиції, а це сприяє збільшенню частоти формування урядів меншості.

Ключові слова: уряд, уряд меншості, парламент, комітет, країни Центрально-Східної Європи.

The peculiarity of European parliamentary democracy, in particular in the countries of Central and Eastern Europe, regardless of the used systems of government – semi-presidential or parliamentary – is that the legitimate mechanism of people's representation within its framework is considered to be the parliamentary method of government formation and responsibility. That is why in parliamentary democracy it is extremely important to focus attention on the nature of

governments, which always or almost always depend on the party composition of parliaments and, accordingly, are often partisan ones. At the same time, it is the party composition of parliaments that is mostly a condition and reason for separation among governments in European parliamentary democracies, including in Central and Eastern Europe (in the broad – geopolitical or European integration – understanding of this region in our study, in particular in Bulgaria, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Romania, Serbia, Slovakia, Slovenia, Hungary, Croatia, the Czech Republic and Montenegro), and majority government cabinets and minority government cabinets. Moreover, in the segment of the former, political science is still considered more informed and developed on average, while the latter are minority governments, primarily due to the fact that they are formed less often (in particular, not in all European parliamentary democracies, including in the region), theoretically and conceptually relatively weakly represented, and therefore definitely actualized by the need for scientific and analytical attention. And this is despite the fact that in some of the countries of Central and Eastern Europe, in particular in Bulgaria, Latvia, Romania, Slovakia, Croatia and the Czech Republic, minority governments still occur (or used to occur) quite often, and in some ones, in particular in Estonia, Poland, Serbia, Slovenia, Hungary, Montenegro, etc., happened very rarely or even did not happen or do not happen and are rather an exception to institutional and political practice. One way or another, the question of the essence and factors of the formation, functioning, stability and efficiency of minority governments is still on the agenda in the context of European parliamentary democracies, in particular in the countries of Central-Eastern Europe. In particular, researchers often appeal to the constitutional-legal, institutional-political, party-electoral, ideological, power-opposition, executive-legislative and intra-governmental attributes of the formation, functioning and responsibility of minority governments in European parliamentary democracies. In our research, we will somewhat narrow our attention and focus on the power-opposition factors and parameters of the structuring of minority governments, in particular on the importance and influence of parliamentary committees in the conditions of the functioning of minority governments, both purely theoretically and within the framework of practical findings in the countries of Central - Eastern Europe.

The specified topic was partially disclosed in the scientific works of such researchers who are mainly interested in the subject of minority governments and the peculiarities of their formation (primarily in the Ukrainians of Western Europe), such as F. Russo and L. Verzichelli¹, but mainly K. Strøm². At the same time, we appealed to the works scientists from the problems of parliamentary committees and parliaments in general in various European parliamentary democracies,

¹ Russo F, Verzichelli L., *The Adoption of Positive and Negative Parliamentarism: Systemic or Idiosyncratic Differences?*, Presented at the ECPR Joint Sessions of Workshops (Salamanca, April 2014).

² 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.

in particular such as A. Agh³, D. Arter⁴, E. Damgaard⁵, W. Francis⁶, G. Hernes⁷, V. Mamadouh and T. Raunio⁸, S. Martin and S. Depauw⁹, I. Mattson and K. Strøm¹⁰, M. Mezey¹¹, D. Olson and W. Crowther¹² and others. Finally, in our study, some existing and own statistical databases on related issues were used, including such as “Comparative political data set”¹³, “Parliaments and governments database”¹⁴, “Governments in Europe”¹⁵. Taking into account all the available scientific developments and statistical data, we, in turn, will try to verify and systematize the existing ideas, and it is also possible to update them by taking into account the political, institutional and power-opposition (at the level of parliaments) experience, primarily in the countries of Central and Eastern Europe.

Therefore, the power-opposition dimension of delineating the essence, influence, functionality and duration of minority governments in parliamentary democracies is directly determined by the structuring and composition of national legislatures/parliaments, which, as stated above, are primary in the context of the formation and responsibility of minority governments. The fact is that, purely arithmetically, minority governments in the categories of power-opposition structuring of parliaments are combined/composed by parties that have a minority in parliaments, while nominally opposition parties have a quantitative (not necessarily political) majority in the latter, although some of them support (regularly or ad hoc, with or without agreements) minority government cabinets. Accordingly, some nominally non-governmental, and therefore nominally oppositional parties (they can be called situational) – especially those that provide support and “survival” of minority governments – receive certain political

³ Agh A., Changing Parliamentary Committees in Changing East-Central Europe: Parliamentary Committees as Central Sites of Policy Making, *The Journal of Legislative Studies* 1998, vol 4, nr. 1, s. 85–100.

⁴ Arter D., *The Nordic Parliaments: A Comparative Analysis*, Wyd. Huust 1984.

⁵ Damgaard E., *Folketinget under forandring*, Wyd. Samfunnsviden-skabeligt Forlag 1977.

⁶ Francis W., Legislative Committee Systems, Optimal Committee Size, and the Costs of Decision Making, *Journal of Politics* 1982, vol 44, s. 822–837.

⁷ Hernes G., *Interest, Influence and Cooptation: A Study of the Norwegian Parliament: PhD dissertation*, Wyd. Johns Hopkins University 1971

⁸ Mamadouh V., Raunio T., The Committee System: Powers, Appointments and Report Allocation, *Journal of Common Market Studies* 2003, vol 41, nr. 2, s. 333–351.

⁹ Martin S., Electoral Institutions, the Personal Vote, and Legislative Organization, *Legislative Studies Quarterly* 2011, vol 36, nr. 2, s. 339–361.; Martin S., Depauw S., *Parliamentary Committees and Multi-Party Government*, Paper for Presentation at the ECPR Joint Sessions 2009 (Lisbon, 14–19 April 2009).; Martin S., Depauw S., *The Impact of Multiparty Government on the Internal Organization of Legislatures*, Paper prepared for presentation at the 69th Annual National Conference of the Midwest Political Science Association (Chicago, 31 March–3 April 2011).

¹⁰ Mattson I., Strøm K., Parliamentary Committees, [w:] Döring H. (ed.), *Parliaments and Majority Rule in Western Europe*, Wyd. St. Martin's Press 1995, s. 249–307.; Strøm K., Parliamentary Committees in European Democracies, *The Journal of Legislative Studies* 1998, vol 4, nr. 1, s. 21–59.; 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 Mezey M., *Comparative Legislatures*, Wyd. Duke University Press 1979.

¹² Olson D., Crowther W., *Committees in Post-Communist Democratic Parliaments: Comparative Institutionalization*, Wyd. Ohio State University 2002.

¹³ Armingeon K., Weisstanner D., Knöpfel L., *Supplement to the Comparative Political Data Set – Government Composition 1960–2020 (36 OECD countries and/or EU-member Countries)*, Universität Bern 2014, źródło: <https://www.cpd-data.org/index.php/data#Supplement> [odczyt: 30.11.2022].

¹⁴ Döring H., Manow P., *Parliaments and governments database (ParlGov): Information on parties, elections and cabinets in modern democracies*, ParlGov, źródło: <http://www.parlgov.org/> [odczyt: 30.11.2022].

¹⁵ Ieraci G., Poropat F., *Governments in Europe (1945–2013): A Data Set*, Wyd. EUT Edizioni Università di Trieste 2013, źródło: http://www.openstarts.units.it/dspace/bitstream/10077/9195/1/WP-DISPES-4-2013_full-text.pdf [odczyt: 30.11.2022].

dividends (either currently or in the future) from various types of such support. However, given that we are dealing with parliamentary democracies and with democracies in general, one can clearly trace something like a norm according to which such discriminations are significantly limited, since a fair distribution of positions, rules and procedures between government and opposition/situational by parties is preserved (or was preserved until recently) at almost every level and in every aspect of parliamentary activity. Along with this, it should be noted that in the last few years, the indicators of the level of democracy have deteriorated in many countries of the analyzed region, and some of them – in particular Hungary – according to various comparative projects, have even ceased to be democracies, becoming hybrid political regimes. Nevertheless, we take into account all the countries listed above, since we will statistically appeal to data from the past, in particular during 1989/1990-2016, when all the countries listed still remained democratic (even in some cases gradually deteriorating their ratings).

Continuing the above logic, it is important to note that all parliamentary organizational structures in the countries of Central and Eastern Europe and in general in parliamentary democracies are formed as much as possible on the basis of proportional representation of parties in legislatures¹⁶. Much less often and even mainly as exceptions, the principles of parity of representation are applied, which are manifested in equal representation in the organizational structures of the parliaments of all parties or of all the total government and all total opposition/non-government parties, regardless of their size in the legislature.

We can observe this, for example, on the example of Slovenia, in which all parliamentary committees are formed according to the proportional principle, i.e. taking into account the party-political configuration of the legislature (i.e. the share of mandates of parliamentary parties), but in the committee for the control of public finances and the committee for the supervision of services intelligence and security, the absolute majority of mandates/members are, surprisingly, deputies from opposition parliamentary groups. In addition, in this country, each standing parliamentary committee has a chair and two deputy chairs, but one of these three must necessarily represent at least one of the opposition parliamentary parties/groups. In contrast, the powers of the parliamentary opposition used to be or still remain quite influential in such countries of Central and Eastern Europe as Serbia and Hungary (although in the latter country they have been significantly weakened politically in the last few years due to the “roll-back” of democracy), but they minority governments are hardly typical or not at all used. For example, in Hungary (at least until 2018), despite the proportional distribution of members of most standing parliamentary committees between parties, some standing committees are formed on the basis of parity, that is, the number of members from government parties is equal to the number of members from opposition parties. In addition, in this country, it used to be

¹⁶ Arter D., *The Nordic Parliaments: A Comparative Analysis*, Wyd. Hurst 1984, s. 191. Damgaard E., *Folketinget under forandring*, Wyd. Samfunnsviden-skabeligt Forlag 1977, s. 140.; Strøm K., Deferred Gratification and Minority Governments in Scandinavia, *Legislative Studies Quarterly* 1986, vol 11, nr. 4, s. 592.

regulated that the National Security Committee (by law) and the Audit and Budget Committee (by political agreement) must be chaired by members of the opposition parties, although minority governments, as mentioned above, hardly ever happen. A similar situation with the absence of minority governments is typical for Montenegro, in which the chairman and deputy chairman of one or another standing parliamentary committee cannot simultaneously represent only the government or only opposition parliamentary parties/groups.

The importance and influence of parliaments in the context of the formation and functioning of governments, in particular minority governments, in parliamentary democracies is supplemented by the fact that without specialization, parliaments themselves or the leading/main chambers of parliaments (where parliaments are bicameral) cannot function as effective instruments of checking and restraining government cabinets and bureaucracy. In addition, it is much more difficult for the government cabinet as such and the leadership of the parliament to control the decentralized discussion process, which generally accompanies parliamentary specialization in various sectors of the economy and social life (typically in parallel with government ministries). Accordingly, specialized (legislative and non-legislative) standing parliamentary committees, given their distinctive attributes, form completely alternative sources of knowledge, information and identification. At the same time, as M. Mezi¹⁷ notes in this regard, effective specialization of legislatures requires a relatively large number of permanent parliamentary committees with fixed areas of jurisdiction, especially when such committees correspond to the specializations of ministries and departments of government cabinets.

However, such logic is implemented extremely rarely, because in European parliamentary democracies it generally happens situationally (and probably most often in Scandinavian countries)¹⁸. In this case, the law-making process and the support of governments as such deteriorate, as MPs feel uninformed about those issues that are not the arena of responsibility of their standing parliamentary committees. In the case of minority governments, the situation is even more complicated since they are often formed when there is a lack of reliable information; in particular, regarding the adoption of expected regulatory and secondary legal acts. Another point, which in the context of the specialization of parliaments or leading/main chambers of parliaments affects the frequency of formation of minority governments, concerns the consensus-oriented form of decision-making by parliamentary committees. The fact is that minority governments are often formed when the legislation and regulations of parliaments provide for closed, not open, meetings of parliamentary committees. If decisions are made in committees in this way, then they are almost always made at plenary sessions of legislatures, and this, provided that the previous requirements are met, institutionally and party-wise contributes to the formation of minority governments.

¹⁷ Mezey M., *Comparative Legislatures*, Wyd. Duke University Press 1979.

¹⁸ Hernes G., *Interest, Influence and Cooptation: A Study of the Norwegian Parliament: PhD dissertation*, Wyd. Johns Hopkins University 1971.; Olsen J., *Organized Democracy: Political Institutions in a Welfare State – The Case of Norway*, Wyd. Universitetsforlaget 1983.

That is why, purely theoretically, the conclusion of K. Strøm¹⁹ and O. Hellevik²⁰ that minority governments should more often be formed in political systems where the work of permanent parliamentary committees is organized in such a way as to promote specialization and cooperation between governmental and opposition (non-governmental) parties, that is, between expected alternatives and the current the government and the opposition works. At the same time, one cannot ignore the factors that significantly limit parliamentary specialization, in particular, significant parliamentary variability and the change of deputies and political parties in successive legislatures, as well as the change of membership in permanent parliamentary committees by deputies (especially in the context of successive parliaments). These factors and the low level of expertise of MPs (if any) create even greater priorities and advantages for opposition parties, and therefore contribute to the formation of minority governments.

For at least a partial verification of the assumptions outlined above, we turn to the ratio, on the one hand, of the frequency of formation and functioning of minority governments, as well as, on the other hand, of the institutional and quantitative-dimensional features and attributes of permanent parliamentary committees in the parliamentary democracies of Central and Eastern Europe in 1989 /1990–2015 (see Table 1). The conducted comparative analysis²¹ confirms that neither the number nor the size of standing parliamentary committees affect the frequency of formation and functioning of minority governments. Thus, minority government cabinets may form frequently or occasionally in countries where the number and size of standing committees are small and medium, as well as large. However, it is on average clear (see Table 2) that the frequency of formation of minority government cabinets increases somewhat (albeit unevenly) in the course of increasing the number, as well as (up to a certain level) the size of standing parliamentary committees. With regard to taking into account the equality of standing parliamentary committees in terms of size, we confirm that minority governments are, on average, more often formed when they are neither formally nor actually equal in size. In contrast, minority governments are significantly less likely to occur if parliamentary committees are formally and effectively equal in size or close/comparable in size. In terms of the proportional distribution of members of standing parliamentary committees between parliamentary parties/groups, it is quite clear that the outlined attribute of the standing of parliamentary committees does not have any impact on the frequency of formation and functioning of minority government cabinets.

¹⁹ Strøm K., Deferred Gratification and Minority Governments in Scandinavia, *Legislative Studies Quarterly* 1986, vol 11, nr. 4, s. 583–605.

²⁰ Hellevik O., *Stortinget-en sosial elite?: En undersøkelse av sammenhengen mellom sosial bakgrunn og politisk karriere*, Wyd. Pax 1969, s. 138.

²¹ Деталізовано і більш статистично наповнено про це йдеться, зокрема в іншому контексті, у монографічній роботі автора. Див.: Panchak-Bialoblotska N., *Uriady mensbosti v yevropeiskykh parlamentskykh demokratiakh*, Wyd. Prostir-M 2017.

Table 1. The influence of institutional and quantitative-dimensional attributes of standing parliamentary committees on the statistics of the formation and functioning of minority government cabinets in the parliamentary democracies of Central and

Europe (1990–2015)

Country	Government statistics (since certain date to December 2015)				Institutional and quantitative-dimensional attributes of standing committees (as of December 2015)					
	All governments	Non-party governments	Party governments		Minority governments %	Actual number of committees	Actual average committee size	Formal/ actual equality of committees in size	Proportional distribution of committee members (formally/ actually)	Formal/ actual combination of membership in various committees
			Majority governments	Minority governments						
Bugaria (since October 1990)	13 (5)	4 (3)	4 (0)	5 (2)	38,5	23	19	-/-	+/+	+/+
Estonia (since September 1992)	15 (0)	0 (0)	11 (0)	4 (0)	26,7	11	10	-/-	+/+	-/+
Latvia (since May 1990)	23 (0)	0 (0)	14 (0)	9 (0)	39,1	16	12	-/-	+/+	+/+
Lithuania (since March 1990)	18 (1)	0 (0)	12 (1)	6 (0)	33,3	15	11	-/-	+/+	-/+
Poland (since June 1989)	21 (2)	0 (0)	15 (1)	6 (1)	28,6	29	27	-/-	+/+	+/+
Romania (since May 1990)	22 (2)	1 (1)	7 (1)	14 (0)	63,6	21	21	-/-	+/+	-/+
Serbia (since January 2007)	4 (0)	0 (0)	4 (0)	0 (0)	0,0	20	17	+/+	+/+	+/+
Slovakia (since June 1990)	15 (1)	0 (0)	10 (0)	5 (1)	33,3	16	13	-/-	+/+	+/+
Slovenia (since April 1990)	16 (0)	0 (0)	12 (0)	4 (0)	25,0	23	15	-/-	+/+	+/-
Hungary (since April 1990)	11 (0)	0 (0)	9 (0)	2 (0)	18,2	15	13	-/-	+/+	+/+
Croatia (since January 2000)	9 (0)	0 (0)	5 (0)	4 (0)	44,4	29	13	+/+	+/+	+/+
Czech Republic (since June 1990)	16 (3)	2 (2)	9 (0)	5 (1)	31,3	18	18	-/-	+/+	+/+
Montenegro (since September 2006)	4 (0)	0 (0)	4 (0)	0 (0)	0,0	14	12	-/-	+/+	+/+

In view of the existing statistics, the analysis was carried out as of December 2015. *Conventional symbols:* “+” – designation of the option when the indicator being tested is activated; “-” – designation of the option when the indicator being tested does not work. Indicators of equality of committees in terms of size and proportional distribution of committee members formally activate when it is provided for by law, and do not activate when it is not regulated. Instead, the indicators of the equality of committees in terms of size and the proportional distribution of committee members actually work when the situations described by the indicator occur in practice, and do not work if they are not observed in practice. The indicator of combining membership in various standing committees formally works when it is allowed by law or not regulated at all, and does not work when it is not regulated. In contrast, the indicator of combining membership in various standing committees actually works if it is mostly implemented in practice, and does not work if it is mostly not implemented. Statistics for government types are calculated together with acting government cabinets (in parentheses). In each country, the analysis of governments was carried out from the date of the first existed in previous time periods or will be in the future, because the analysis is based on the regulations of the legislatures (in this case – as of 2015). The used regulations are taken from the official websites of the parliaments. Other scientific studies, including our authorship, were also used. *Zdroj:* Strom K., Parliamentary Committees in European Democracies, “The Journal of Legislative Studies” 1998, vol. 4, nr. 1, p. 822–837.; Agh A., Changing Parliamentary Committees as Central Sites of Policy Making, “The Journal of Legislative Studies” 1996, vol. 4, nr. 1, p. 85–100.; Olson D., Crowther W., Committees in Post-Communist Democratic Parliaments: Comparative Institutionalization, *West. Ohio State University 2002*; Döring H., Manow P., Parliaments and governments database (ParlGov): Information on parties, elections and cabinets in modern democracies, ParlGov, source: <http://www.parl.gov.org/> (odczyt: 30.11.2022); Armingeon K., Weissstanner D., Knöfel L., Supplement to the Comparative Political Data Set – GovernmentComposition 1960–2020 (36 OECD countries and/or EU-member Countries), *Universitäts Bem 2014*, *zdrob:*

In addition, it should be noted that today in all parliamentary democracies in Central and Eastern Europe, the members of all or most of the standing parliamentary committees are distributed among the parliamentary parties/groups in proportion to the share of their parliamentary mandates. Instead, parliamentary committees are very rarely, as mentioned above, formed on the basis of parity and even less often due to consideration of the principles of the majority. Accordingly, opposition parliamentary parties have the opportunity to be represented in all standing committees equally and proportionally to the shares of their parliamentary mandates (at least as of 2015–2016). Finally, regarding whether deputies have and exercise the right to combine membership in different standing committees, it is quite obvious that most minority governments (although, as before, with significant exceptions) are formed in those systems in which formally no or nothing is allowed provided for combining the membership of all deputies in several standing parliamentary committees, even though some deputies are actually members of several such committees.

In view of this, it is generally obvious that in determining the influence of the parliamentary opposition on the frequency of formation and peculiarities of the functioning of minority government cabinets in European parliamentary democracies, including in the countries of Central and Eastern Europe, consideration of parliamentary committees, in particular their institutional and quantitative-dimensional attributes, has a very relative and indirect meaning. Instead, K. Strom notes that the influence of such attributes of parliamentary committees as their “power” and specificity²² is more vivid. It is generally believed that systems of strong parliamentary committees (for example, in Latvia, Romania) contribute to the strengthening of the parliamentary opposition, which collectively leads to an increase in the influence of parliamentary committees and the parliamentary opposition on government activities and politics, especially in the case of minority governments, which are generally in the legislature and have a minority in every or almost every standing committee.

Therefore, in this case, minority governments should be formed much more often (if it is institutionally and legislatively possible). Especially when, according to Sh. Martin and S. Depu²³, when the political system is mostly formed and dominated by coalition governments rather than single-party ones. However, this does not at all mean that in a political system dominated by one-party or minority coalition governments, parliamentary committee systems are stronger. This is even more evident, from B. Powell’s point of view²⁴, when systems of strong parliamentary committees are observed in countries with proportional electoral systems.

Partly expanding the proposed remark, A. Leiphart argues that the “strength” of parliamentary committee systems is determined specifically by the predominant type of political institutions in one

²² Strom K., *Minority Government and Majority Rule*, Wyd. Cambridge University Press 1990.; Strom K., *Parliamentary government and legislative organization*, [w:] Doring H. (ed.), *Parliaments and Majority Rule in Western Europe*, Wyd. St. Martin’s Press 1995, s. 51–82.

²³ Martin S., Depauw S., *Parliamentary Committees and Multi-Party Government*, Paper for Presentation at the ECPR Joint Sessions 2009 (Lisbon, 14–19 April 2009).

²⁴ Powell B., *Elections as Instruments of Democracy: Majoritarian and Proportional Visions*, Wyd. Yale University Press 2000, s. 34.

or another political system, in particular, by the type of democracy in which the parliament works – consensus or majoritarian²⁵. However, even so, the degree of consensus in each political system, being almost always positively related to the “strength” of parliamentary committees, weakens or disappears altogether when a distinction is made between single-party and coalition government cabinets.

Table 2. Correlation of the minority government cabinets frequency of formation and functioning and institutional and quantitative-dimensional attributes of standing parliamentary committees in parliamentary democracies in Central and Eastern Europe (1989/1990–2016)

Attributes of standing parliamentary committees	Frequency of minority governments, %
<i>I. The average actual number of permanent parliamentary committees (q), no</i>	
$q > 20$	40,9
$10 \leq q \leq 20$	23,0
$q < 10$	–
<i>II. Average actual size of standing parliamentary committees (s), no</i>	
$s > 30$	–
$15 \leq s \leq 30$	31,9
$s < 15$	28,1
<i>III. Equality of standing parliamentary committees in terms of size</i>	
III. Equality of standing parliamentary committees in terms of size	22,2
Committees are not formally equal in size, but they are equal ones	–
Committees are not equal in size either formally or in fact	31,3
<i>Proportional distribution of members of standing parliamentary committees</i>	
It is not formally foreseen, but it is actually implemented	–
Formally foreseen and implemented in fact	29,9
<i>V. Combination of membership of deputies in various standing parliamentary committees</i>	
Formally allowed and implemented in fact	26,8
Formally allowed, but not actually implemented	18,2
Not formally allowed, but actually implemented	42,9
Not formally allowed and not actually implemented	–

The weighted average frequency of minority governments for each attribute of standing parliamentary committees is calculated based on the determination of the arithmetic mean frequency of formation, rather than the number of minority governments during each parliamentary term in each CEE parliamentary democracy (in the relevant time frame). In view of the available statistics, the analysis was carried out as of December 2015. The table was compiled based on the data of the table.

1. This is described in detail and more statistically in the author’s monographic work. Prostrir-M 2017.

On this basis (and also taking into account the statistics on the parliamentary democracies of Western Europe), F. Russo and L. Verzicelli²⁶ argue that parliamentary committees are the most important tools for monitoring the implementation of political control over government offices in

²⁵ Lijphart A., *Patterns of Democracy: Government Forms and Performance in Thirty-Six Countries*, Wyd. Yale University Press 1999.

²⁶ Russo F., Verzicelli L., *The Adoption of Positive and Negative Parliamentarism: Systemic or Idiosyncratic Differences?*, Presented at the ECPR Joint Sessions of Workshops (Salamanca, April 2014), s. 5–6.

the analyzed type of political systems. The fact is that in all European parliamentary democracies, all draft laws, including those initiated by government cabinets, must be discussed and analyzed by standing parliamentary committees before being presented to plenary sessions of parliaments or leading/main chambers of parliaments. The latter are sometimes formed in the shape of specialized committees, reflecting the competences of government ministries and departments. By covering different policy areas, specialized standing parliamentary committees reduce the information asymmetry that legislatures tend to suffer from. By covering different policy areas, specialized standing parliamentary committees reduce the asymmetry of information that legislatures tend to suffer from. In this regard, the position of M. Mezey is correct, who rightly observes that parliaments with relatively strong directive powers have well-developed standing committee systems that enable them to divide legislative work so that a degree of legislative scrutiny is created in most policy areas²⁷. As a result, it is quite clear that the specifics and “strength” of parliamentary committees directly depend on the specifics and “strength”/power of parliaments, and therefore are outlined, according to I. Mattson and K. Strøm²⁸, by distinctive institutional and procedural attributes of parliamentary committees, which boil down to dimensions such as legislative authority (ie, the ability to initiate or amend legislation) and agenda control.

Taking them as a basis, scientists develop various methods of comparative analysis of the “strength” of standing parliamentary committees. For example, V. Mamadou and T. Raunio²⁹ proposed an index of the formal “strength” of parliamentary committees, which is based on six indicators. Instead, S. Martin proposed an index of the “strength” of parliamentary committees, which is based on nine institutional features of committee systems, and therefore empirically can range from “0” to “9” points (when an increase in the number of points indicates an increase in the “strength” of committees)³⁰.

This index was developed and improved in parallel by S. Martin and S. Depu³¹. They also singled out nine institutional features of parliamentary committees that confirm their “strength”, but defined them quite specifically. Scholars assume that government parties, fearing or facing ministerial reshuffles, are able to agree or at least not object to institutional rules that provide parliamentary committees with some so-called “extended structures and powers” in exchange for the ability to “monitor” coalition partners or by non-governmental/opposition parties (especially in the case of minority cabinets). As a result, Sh. Martin and S. Depu clearly argue that from an institutional point of view, that parliamentary committee is strong, which is structurally endowed with the opportunity

²⁷ Mezey M., *Comparative Legislatures*, Wyd. Duke University Press 1979.

²⁸ Strøm K., *Minority Government and Majority Rule*, Wyd. Cambridge University Press 1990.; Mattson I., Strøm K., *Parliamentary Committees*, [w:] Doring H. (ed.), *Parliaments and Majority Rule in Western Europe*, Wyd. St. Martin's Press 1995, s. 249–307.

²⁹ Mamadough V., Raunio T., The Committee System: Powers, Appointments and Report Allocation, *Journal of Common Market Studies* 2003, vol 41, nr 2, s. 333–351.

³⁰ Martin S., Electoral Institutions, the Personal Vote, and Legislative Organization, *Legislative Studies Quarterly* 2011, vol 36, nr 2, s. 339–361.

³¹ Martin S., Depauw S., *Parliamentary Committees and Multi-Party Government*, Paper for Presentation at the ECPR Joint Sessions 2009 (Lisbon, 14–19 April 2009); Martin S., Depauw S., *The Impact of Multiparty Government on the Internal Organization of Legislatures*, Paper prepared for presentation at the 69th Annual National Conference of the Midwest Political Science Association (Chicago, 31 March–3 April 2011).

to influence the legislative process and can also provide control and supervision over the activities of the government cabinet³². In order to check how strong parliamentary committees are, the researchers developed an index of nine indicators. Each of them reveals the peculiarities of choice in the institutional design of committee systems and affects whether parliamentary committees are able to reduce government-ministerial reshuffles and prolong the stability of government cabinets.

I propose to consider and verify the nine indicators in the “strength” index of the parliamentary committees of Sh. Martin and S. Depu³³. Among them: 1. Do the specializations of parliamentary committees correspond to the specializations of government ministries and departments? Note: the more the committee system corresponds to the ministerial portfolios, the better the committees can monitor the actions and behavior of individual ministers, entire ministries and departments, and also have a decisive say over the content of legislation in one or another policy area. Specialization is defined as the proportion of government cabinet ministers whose portfolios coincide with the specialization of each particular standing committee; 2. Whether draft laws are considered by committees before the plenary session of the parliament or the leading/main chamber of the parliament (in the case of bicameralism). The earlier the committee is involved in the law-making process, the more influential it should probably be. In contrast, it is much more difficult for the committee to influence the draft law, in particular the government bill, if it has already been discussed and voted on at the plenary session of the legislature; 3. Do committees have the right of legislative initiative?

The ability to act independently of the government and independently initiate bills signals the strong role of agenda control by the committee system in the lawmaking process. Even if a cabinet minister shirks promised legislation, a strong committee is usually able to compensate for the minister’s inaction by initiating legislation on its own; 4. Does the parliamentary committee have the right to introduce and adopt changes/amendments to draft laws and already adopted laws? Weak committees have little ability to amend government bills. Instead, powerful committees have the right to revise and amend government bills. But even then, the minister may be entitled to promise amendments to the committee, limiting the committee’s role in scrutinizing and shaping legislation; 5. Can committees compel ministers to attend their meetings? If so, the committees are powerful because they are able to scrutinize and question the activities of ministers, and to identify where ministerial actions differ from coalition agreements (if any); 6. Whether committees can compel civil servants to attend their meetings? If so, then the committees are strong, because civil servants are important sources of ministerial/government information, as well as direct “agents” of ministers. Accordingly, they are able to report on the actions and inactions of ministers, as a result of which committees are better able to monitor and evaluate the activities of governments, government ministries and departments; in particular, it is relevant in the context of minority governments); 7. Do subcommittees exist? It is obvious that subcommittees provide a mechanism for further specialization

³² Martin S., Depauw S., *Parliamentary Committees and Multi-Party Government*, Paper for Presentation at the ECPR Joint Sessions 2009 (Lisbon, 14–19 April 2009), s. 5.

³³ Martin S., Depauw S., *Parliamentary Committees and Multi-Party Government*, Paper for Presentation at the ECPR Joint Sessions 2009 (Lisbon, 14–19 April 2009), s. 5–6.

and delegation of workload for committees. Hence, as the consequence of the fact that the work within the committees will be distributed and detailed there may be an increase of the effectiveness of the committee system; 8. Whether the committee may publish the reports of the minority (or of any of its dissenting members)? Such reports are a rather important source of critical information, especially when committees cannot reach consensus, and therefore have the potential to be used as a source of information about coalition disputes. The fact is that one party may publicly disagree with the political positions and proposals of another or other parties (including governmental ones). Therefore, such reports can serve as a tool for opposition parties to propose alternatives to government policy (this is particularly relevant in the context of minority governments); 9. Is the committee's time resource unique? Legislators are endowed with limited resources, not least in the last way and at the expense of time. If MPs have to choose between committee work and plenary work, they may be less inclined to focus on committee tasks. And in order for the committee to be strong, it is important that the period of the committee's work does not coincide with the time of the plenary session. Taking this into account, as well as on the basis of the verification of indicators, which, in our opinion, comprehensively outline the "strength" of parliamentary committees in European parliamentary democracies (according to the list of countries proposed by Sh. Martin and S. Depu³⁴), we compare the obtained conclusions with the statistics of the formation and the functioning of minority governments in the countries of Central - Eastern Europe (see Tables 3 and 4).

Table 3. The influence of the "strength" of standing parliamentary committees on the statistics of the formation and functioning of minority governments in parliamentary democracies in Central and Eastern Europe (1989/1990–2015)

Country	All governments	Minority governments	Minority governments %	Attributes of the „power” of standing committees										
				1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	In total	
Estonia (since September 1992)	15 (0)	4 (0)	26,7	0,81	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	0	0	5,81
Latvia (since May 1990)	23 (0)	9 (0)	39,1	0,33	1	1	1	0	0	1	1	0	5,33	
Lithuania (since March 1990)	18 (1)	6 (0)	33,3	0,69	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	7,69	
Poland (since June 1989)	21 (2)	6 (1)	28,6	0,82	1	1	1	0	0	0	1	0	4,82	
Slovakia (since June 1990)	15 (1)	5 (1)	33,3	0,63	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	1	7,88	
Slovenia (since April 1990)	16 (0)	4 (0)	25,0	0,86	1	0	1	1	1	1	1	1	7,86	
Hungary (since April 1990)	11 (0)	2 (0)	18,2	0,62	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	0	6,62	
Czech Republic (since June 1990)	16 (3)	5 (1)	31,3	0,66	1	1	1	1	1	0	1	0	6,66	

The table uses the calculations of S. Martin and S. Depu (as of 2009), which do not include such countries as Bulgaria, Romania, Serbia, Croatia, and Montenegro. Regarding the statistics of the types of governments, it is calculated together with the acting government cabinets (in brackets). In each country, the analysis of government offices was carried out from the date of the first post-communist and at the same time democratic parliamentary elections. Źródło: Martin S., Depauw S., *Parliamentary Committees and Multi-Party Government*, Paper for Presentation at the ECPR Joint Sessions 2009 (Lisbon, 14–19 April 2009); Martin S., Depauw S., *The Impact of Multiparty Government on the Internal Organization of Legislatures*, Paper prepared for presentation at the 69th Annual National Conference of the Midwest Political Science Association (Chicago, March 31–April 3, 2011); Ieraci G., Poropat F., *Governments in Europe (1945–2013): A Data Set*, Wyd. EUT Edizioni

³⁴ Martin S., Depauw S., *Parliamentary Committees and Multi-Party Government*, Paper for Presentation at the ECPR.

Università di Trieste 2013, source: http://www.openstarts.units.it/dspace/bitstream/10077/9195/1/WP-DJSPES-4-2013_full-text.pdf[odczyt: 30.11.2022].; Döring H., Manow P., Parliaments and governments database (ParlGov): Information on parties, elections and cabinets in modern democracies, ParlGov, source: <http://www.parlgov.org/>[odczyt:30.11.2022].; Panchak-Bialoblotska N., Uriady menhosti v yevropeiskiykh parlamentskiykh demokratiikh, Wyd. Prostrir-M 2017.

On the basis of such a comparison, it is quite obvious that the average statistical “strength” of permanent parliamentary committees in the countries of Central and Eastern Europe does not unidirectional affect the frequency of formation and functioning of minority governments in the region (at least in most countries of the region). After all, minority governments are both often and rarely observed in those countries that are characterized by strong or weak parliamentary committees. In general, it has been established that minority government cabinets in the countries of Central and Eastern Europe are most often found in systems that are characterized by neither maximally weak nor maximally strong parliamentary committees (see Table 4).

However, in such a context one must always take into account the fact that in Central - Eastern Europe parliamentary committees are on average stronger than in Western Europe. This is one of the reasons why minority governments in the countries of Central - Eastern Europe occur even more often than on average in the countries of Western Europe (which is also a certain paradox).

Table 4. Correlation of the frequency of formation and functioning of minority government cabinets and the “strength” of standing parliamentary committees in the parliamentary democracies of Central and Eastern Europe (1989/1990–2015)

Attributes of the “strength” of standing parliamentary committees	Frequency of minority governments, %
<i>I. The average „strength” of parliamentary committees (p)</i>	
$p > 7,0$	30,5
$5,0 < p \leq 7,0$	29,3
$3,0 < p \leq 5,0$	30,0
$p \leq 3,0$	–
<i>II. Jurisdiction of Standing Committees Jurisdiction of Ministries (SP)</i>	
$SP > 0,67$	27,9
$0,33 < SP \leq 0,67$	27,6
$SP \leq 0,33$	39,1
<i>III. The right of committees to consider bills before the plenary session of the parliament</i>	
Yes	29,9
No	–
<i>IV. The right of legislative initiative of committees</i>	
Yes	30,5
No	25,0
<i>V. The right of committees to introduce and adopt changes in draft laws and adopted laws</i>	
Yes	29,9
No	–
<i>VI. The right of committees to mix ministers to attend their meetings</i>	
Yes	28,3
No	34,6

Attributes of the "strength" of standing parliamentary committees	Frequency of minority governments, %
<i>VII. The right of committees to compel civil servants to attend their meetings</i>	
Yes	28,3
No	34,6
<i>VIII. Availability of subcommittees of standing committees</i>	
Yes	29,8
No	30,0
<i>The right of committees to issue minority (dissenting members) reports</i>	
Yes	31,7
No	26,7
<i>The need to choose between a government meeting and a plenary meeting</i>	
Yes	29,2
No	30,1

The weighted average frequency of minority governments for each attribute of the strength of standing parliamentary committees is calculated based on the determination of the arithmetic mean frequency of formation, not the number of minority governments during each parliamentary term in each parliamentary democracy of Central and Eastern Europe (in the appropriate time period). In view of the available statistics, the analysis was carried out as of December 2015. The table was compiled on the basis of the data in the table. 3. This is discussed in detail and more statistically in the author's monographic work. Źródło: Panchak-Bialoblotska N., *Uriady menshosti v yevropejskykh parlamentskykh demokratiikh*, Wyd. Prostir-M 2017.

The obtained conclusions are positively (i.e., not one-sided) compared with the assessment of the relationship between individual indicators of the "strength" of parliamentary committees and the frequency of the formation of minority governments in parliamentary democracies in Central and Eastern Europe. As a result, it is clear that the "strength" of parliamentary committees cannot be considered a direct predictor of the frequency and effectiveness of minority governments in parliamentary democracies, at least in terms of the countries of the analyzed region. For example, the "strength" of parliamentary committees and the frequency of the minority governments formation are statistically and weighted average directly proportionally related to such indicators of the "strength" of parliamentary committees as: correspondence of the specialization of standing committees to the specialization of government ministries and departments; the right of legislative initiative of parliamentary committees; the right of standing committees to introduce and adopt changes in draft laws and already adopted laws; the right of committees to compel ministers and civil servants to attend committee meetings. In the case of strengthening of other indicators of the "strength" of parliamentary committees, the frequency of forming minority governments does not increase, and sometimes even decreases. All this argues that the "strength" of parliamentary committees should be interpreted only as an additional predictor of the formation of minority government cabinets in parliamentary democracies in Central and Eastern Europe, although it is much more important in some countries of Western Europe. On the other hand, the strengthening of standing parliamentary committees can serve to strengthen the parliamentary opposition, which, in turn, contributes to the increase in the frequency of the formation of minority governments.

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