

# Institutional Opportunities of the Parliamentary Opposition in Slovakia: Useless Tools or Powerful Weapons?

KATARÍNA CHOVANCOVÁ\*

## Abstract

The only actor capable of restraining the government from directly within the parliament is the parliamentary opposition. In the case of the Slovak parliament, the opposition is not formally institutionalized, but it definitely has the capacity to become so. However, in Slovakia governments usually enjoy the majority in parliament. Thus, the restraining possibilities of the parliamentary opposition are limited. Nevertheless, this influence is not unimportant. This paper analyzes all the institutional opportunities of the opposition in the National Council of the Slovak Republic in the period 1994–2012. It focuses on the following institutional factors: capability of the opposition to influence the approval of any bill; amendments of Rules of Procedure; selection of parliamentary offices; confidence and no-confidence votes; parliamentary questions and interpellations; constitutional review, and referendum.

*Key words:* Slovakia; parliament; opposition; government; institutional opportunities

DOI: 10.5817/PC2016-3-211

## 1. Introduction

Democratic regimes and processes of democratization have frequently been subjects of analysis, as well as the subject of public interest. As Helms (2004) highlights, when new democracies are being created, the restriction of governmental power is a key step towards democracy itself. The only subject which has opportunity to directly restrain the executive from within a parliament is, in parliamentary democracies, the parliamentary opposition. According to Christiansen and Damgaard (2008), opposition parties are essential to parliamentary democracy. Thus, I consider it important to analyse the institutional opportunities the parliamentary opposition has to execute its influence on the government. As will be

---

\* Mgr. Katarína Chovancová, Masaryk University, Joštova 10, Brno, Czech Republic; e-mail: chovancova\_katarina@yahoo.sk.

discussed below, such an analysis has been done in several countries separately, as well as having been brought into a comparative perspective. However, there has not been such research done in case of the Slovak Republic. Thus, it is worthwhile to analyze all opportunities which may be used by the parliamentary opposition in the National Council of the Slovak Republic (later referred as 'the National Council'). The analysis covers the period from the beginning of its first electoral term to the end of its fifth electoral term, from December 1994 to April 2012.

This paper provides a complex overview of all relevant opportunities of the Slovak parliamentary opposition to control the action of the government and to influence the legislative process and its outputs. Based on an analysis of these opportunities over a longer period, the paper creates a complex picture of the evolution of the parliamentary opposition's rights in Slovakia. The structure of the article is as follows: First, it provides the reader with a theoretical background with a focus on democracies in Central and Eastern Europe. Second, it outlines a short overview of the institutional characteristics of the Slovak parliament. In the next section, the results of the analysis of the rights of the Slovak parliamentary opposition are introduced, and how these rights are actually executed is considered. Above all, significant importance is given to Parliamentary Rules of Procedure and their amendments since these rules and their changes institutionalise and strongly influence all the opportunities the opposition may use vis-à-vis the government. Thus, as can be seen later in the paper, the section dedicated to the Parliamentary Rules of Procedure is detailed and significantly longer than the others. In the last section, the presented findings are summarized.

## 2. State of the Art

As Helms (2008) states, political minorities, including religious or ethnic ones, are frequently the subject of research. Moreover, political scientists have also been drawn to the phenomenon of protest as a specific form of the political opposition or to non-governmental organizations. On the other hand, he notes that there are no complex comparative studies of parliamentary opposition. I cannot fully agree with this. Although parliamentary opposition has not been frequently analysed in political science, we can find several studies which focus on its characteristics, its rights, or on legislative-executive relations<sup>1</sup> in a wider context. When we look at recent studies of the opposition only, one of them is written by Helms (2004). He summarizes five ways of institutionalizing a political opposition, based on case studies of Great Britain, Germany, France, the USA, and Switzerland. Koß (2011) focuses on a similar topic and analyzes the parliaments of Great Britain and Germany in the period of 1870–1918, when the rights of parliamentary minorities were institutionalized. As he declares, decisions about the character of these rights and conflicts about their changes in the initial phases of this process significantly affected the future position of parliamentary minorities towards parliamentary majorities.

Other comparative studies of several countries include papers by Christiansen and Damgaard (2008) and Damgaard and Jensen (2013), both focusing on parliaments of Nordic countries in general and legislative-executive relations in these parliaments in particular.

Kopecký (2005) shares this subject of analysis but focuses on the region of Central and Eastern Europe. When analyzing parliaments in this region and the legislative-executive relations within them, he focuses on the influence of the communist past, but also describes the contemporary position of parliaments vis-à-vis governments. As he notes, rules regulating interactions within parliaments in CEE have been stabilized. The institutional capacity of parliaments has increased; however, this does not indicate that they have a strong position towards governments. In fact, the opposite is true – the executives in these countries have strengthened their position in recent years, primarily because of the influence of factors such as party system stabilization and European integration that provided executive branches with specific legislative competencies. Kubát (2010) offers a complex picture of a political opposition, significantly contributing to literature in this field. He first brings in a theoretical overview of the political opposition in democratic and undemocratic regimes and then focuses on the political opposition in CEE, describing not only its formal position, but also on its behaviour in practice.

When it comes to the parliamentary opposition in the Slovak Republic, specific analysis of this kind has been absent. One relevant analysis, however, is definitely that of Malová and Dolný (2010). They focus on the legislative-executive relations in general and discuss them in the case of the Slovak parliament as well. Czech and Slovak parliaments are analysed and compared by Kopecký (2001), who describes not only a party competition in these two legislatures but also parliamentary institutionalisation in former Czechoslovakia and in the subsequently separate countries, relations of parliaments with the electorate as well as legislative-executive relations. Slovak party politics has also been the object of the analysis of several authors. A complex overview of the party system formation process in Slovakia and its evolution was realized, for instance, by Leška (2013), who focuses on all relevant Slovak parliamentary parties and their character as well as on the character of the party system in each electoral period in the individual years between 1989 and 2012. A similar overview can be also found in Strmiska et al. (2005) who write about political parties in modern European countries; their work includes a complex picture of the Slovak party politics as well.

### 3. How Should We Operationalize the Parliamentary Opposition?

As we have seen, the opposition has drawn the attention of number of political scientists. The question, however, is what ‘the opposition’ means. As Shapiro (1996: 51) claims, ‘democracy is an ideology of opposition as much as it is one of government.’ Dahl (1966: 18) conceptualizes the parliamentary opposition as follows:

Suppose that A determines the conduct of some aspect of the government of a particular political system during some interval. Suppose that during this interval B cannot determine the conduct of the government; and that B is opposed to the conduct of government by A. Then B is what we mean by ‘an opposition.’

Norton (2008) adds that it is primarily defining itself against a ruling government that is the main characteristic of the parliamentary opposition. Having said that, Dahl (1966) also concluded that there was not any unified definition of the parliamentary opposition. As he claimed, we should focus on different aspects of its role in the parliament, such as its concentration, competitiveness, its typical characteristics, aims, and strategies. When defining the main aspects of opposition political parties, Christiansen and Damgaard (2008: 46) focus on 'their composition in terms of strength, ideology and fragmentation, their institutional setting, their role in the legislative process and, finally, their importance compared to non-parliamentary oppositions.' All of these definitions bring our attention to aspects of the parliamentary opposition which distinguish it from the government, from other types of opposition and, to some extent, parliamentary oppositions from different countries or in different electoral terms. This paper puts forward the idea that most of the important aspects of the parliamentary opposition can be included in one broader category – their *institutional opportunities*. The institutional framework provides the parliamentary opposition with particular opportunities<sup>2</sup> which it may use to exert its influence in the parliament, or more precisely, vis-à-vis the government. Before defining the institutional framework itself, I should stress that the position of the opposition towards the government is its most important characteristic. The parliamentary opposition undoubtedly is a dependent entity, since its action is limited by the action of the government. Putting it into the context of the institutional framework that forms an arena for parliamentary opposition action, it should be stressed that this framework is created and can be changed by the parliamentary majority only. Furthermore, it is the government itself that usually enjoys the majority in parliament. Thus, this 'dependent circle' cannot be ignored when analyzing the parliamentary opposition. The question is then what forms this institutional framework and which opportunities of the parliamentary opposition are institutionalized this way.

Kopecký and Spirova (2008) identify three main determinants of the formal strength of the opposition in the parliament. These are: *i*. Political restraining of the government via confidence and no-confidence votes and via question time; *ii*. Influencing the content of proposed bills and enacted laws through participation in the legislative process; *iii*. Ex-post oversight of government policies by constitutional review motions or by initiating a referendum. Institutional factors determining the strength of the opposition in the parliament were also defined by Helms (2008). He recognized the following factors: *i*. The party system; *ii*. The electoral system; *iii*. The rules for financing political parties; *iv*. The structure of the institutional opportunities within the parliament; *v*. The structure of the institutional opportunities outside of the parliament. The opportunities which the opposition may use within the parliament are: questioning members of the government; confidence and no-confidence votes, including the opposition in the process of setting the agenda; the right of individual MPs or parliamentary party groups to propose bills; a structure of a system of parliamentary committees; the right of minorities in parliament to create investigation committees; and the type of a majority required for passing a constitutional amendment (Kopecký, Spirova 2008).

Zubek (2011) concentrates on different aspects – he identifies three main factors which determine the extent to which governing majorities can limit the procedural rights of the

parliamentary minorities. These are: *i.* The historical background that has influenced the institutional setting in the parliament; *ii.* Exogenous institutions: the constitution, the electoral system, and parliamentary Rules of Procedure; *iii.* Party competition. As he claims, the more concentrated a party system is, the stronger the majority party position is, for instance, in parliamentary committees or in a parliamentary presidency.

In fact, not all of the factors defined by these authors are fully applicable when analyzing the position of the opposition in the case of the National Council of the Slovak Republic. In the pre-research phase, I have defined all the relevant factors with at least minimal potential for influencing the distribution of powers between the government and the opposition in the Slovak parliament. The presence or absence of all of them can be verified; it is possible to quantify them, measure them, and observe their change over time. Since I do analyse institutional factors only, I do not concentrate on the historical background in which the overall parliamentary setting was created. This might bring us to the previous state formations of which Slovakia was a member; different parliaments existed then, and this is a longer story which is not fully relevant for the purposes of this paper. In the analysis, I concentrate on the following institutional factors affecting the position of the parliamentary opposition towards the government:

- The character of the party system
- Internal institutional opportunities:
  - General parliamentary minority opportunities to influence the passing of any bill, constitutional amendment, or an amendment to the Rules of Procedure
  - The right of legislative initiative of individual MPs
  - Confidence and no-confidence votes for (members of) the government
  - Parliamentary question time and interpellations of members of the government
  - Nominations for parliamentary offices
- External institutional opportunities for exerting its influence outside of the parliament:
  - Constitutional review motions
  - Referendum initiative

After defining these factors, all data<sup>3</sup> were collected and analysed quantitatively, which was supplemented by content analysis. More precisely, the quantitative analysis was applied to all bills proposed in the National Council during the period under review, to motions on the Rules of Procedure amendments, to initiatives for (no) confidence votes, to lists of members of parliamentary committees and parliamentary presidency, to interpellations, to parliamentary questions, and to constitutional review motions. The qualitative analysis was conducted on the content of proposed amendments of the Rules of Procedure, constitutional review motions, referendum initiatives and, in the sample of data chosen for research, on the cases of interpellations and parliamentary questions. In all these cases, the text of these materials was analysed and its topics were coded and thus divided into a number of separate categories. After the first stage of coding, categories were, according to their content, grouped together into wider categories, all of which are mentioned in sections of this paper dealing with these institutional factors.

## 4. Institutional Characteristics of the Slovak Parliament and the Party System

The National Council of the Slovak Republic is unicameral, consisting of 150 MPs elected for four years. The right of legislative initiative belongs to parliamentary committees, individual MPs, and the government. Sessions of the National Council are chaired by its Speaker and Deputy Speakers. To take any action, there must be a quorum of at least one half of all MPs; to pass a bill or a resolution, a simple majority of those present is needed. In the case of a vote of (no) confidence, a vote on the dismissal of the Speaker or one of the Deputy Speakers of the National Council, or in other cases defined by the constitution, an absolute majority is needed. When passing a constitutional amendment, approving a parliamentary session not open to public or in other specific cases, a majority of three-fifths of all MPs is required. Voting in the National Council is by secret-ballot. There may be an open vote if it is allowed by the constitution, a law, or by a resolution of the National Council. All legislation, once passed in the National Council, is then considered by the president of the Slovak Republic. For passing the legislation which has been previously vetoed by the president, an absolute majority is needed.

The legislative process consists of three readings. During the first reading, a general discussion about a proposed bill takes place without proposing any amendments. In this phase, the National Council returns the bill to its author for further processing, stops its consideration, or sends it to the second reading. In this reading, it is possible to propose amendments which either change or supplement the bill. This is possible when more than fifteen MPs vote for such a proposal amendment. In the third reading, MPs primarily propose corrections to legislative mistakes. If they want to propose amendments supplementing or changing the bill itself, at least thirty MPs have to vote for such a proposal amendment. In the third reading, bills are enacted.

The position or rights of the Slovak parliamentary opposition are not explicitly defined either in the constitution or in the Rules of Procedure of the National Council. Thus, when focusing on the institutional opportunities of the opposition in the National Council of the Slovak Republic, we must consider those opportunities which are institutionally assigned to individual MPs or to the National Council as a whole. These are stated in the constitution and more specifically regulated by the parliamentary Rules of Procedure. These rules were created in the form of a Law on the Rules of Procedure of the National Council of the Slovak Republic, entering into force on 1 January 1997. Before that, the action of the National Council was regulated by the Rules of Procedure of the former Slovak National Council.<sup>4</sup>

When considering particular opportunities of the opposition, we should primarily focus on its right to restrain the government and its members. Firstly, there is an investiture vote that is necessary for giving the government its executive mandate after its formation in a new electoral term. For passing such a vote, an absolute majority of all MPs is required. If the government does not pass the investiture vote in six months after its designation, it may be dissolved by the president. In addition to this, the National Council can call a vote of no confidence for the whole government or its individual members. A motion initiating

this procedure has to be presented by at least one-fifth of MPs. Then, the National Council is obliged to consider such motion. When voting, to pass the no-confidence vote, an absolute majority of all MPs is required. Furthermore, the government can ask the National Council for a confidence vote any time or it can attach a confidence vote to a bill or any other motion. If the government does not pass such a vote or the National Council refuses to consider such a motion, the president may dissolve the government.

Another way that the opposition can inhibit the government is through the use of interpellations of members of the government and question time. Interpellations may be presented in either written or oral forms. In both cases, even if it is presented and answered orally on the floor in the National Council, the government member who is asked must respond to the interpellation within thirty days. After receiving an answer, it is considered at the next parliamentary session and the author of the interpellation is asked if (s)he considers the answer satisfying. Question time is regularly a part of parliamentary sessions. It lasts sixty minutes; the first fifteen minutes are reserved for the Prime Minister. All questions must be proposed by twelve o'clock the day before the question time takes place and the questions which will be asked during the question time are drawn by lot. The rest of the questions must be answered in written form within thirty days.

In addition to the opportunities mentioned above, the parliamentary opposition in Slovakia can also take advantage of two other opportunities to exert its influence on the government outside of the parliament. Specifically, according to the constitution, it can ask the Constitutional Court for a constitutional review of any legislation once it has been passed by the parliament. The number of sponsors for such an initiative is thirty MPs. Before 2001, any legislation under constitutional review was still in force. Based on a constitutional amendment passed in 2001, however, the Constitutional Court may pre-emptively suspend the legislation under review. Finally, another opportunity that may be used by the opposition MPs is proposing a resolution on a referendum.

Let us briefly look at the electoral and party systems of Slovakia. Slovak parliamentary elections use a proportional representation system with a five-percent hurdle with only one constituency. An individual political party has to obtain five percent of all votes cast in an election; a coalition of two or three parties must win seven percent of the vote; a coalition of four parties or more must win ten percent nationwide. The Hagenbach-Bischoff electoral formula is used, and the ballot is semi-closed (Chytilek, Šedo 2009). Although there is a ranked list of candidates given by the party, voters can change the rank by awarding between one and four equally weighted preference votes.

In the years 1994–2012, the party system of Slovakia was definitely characterized as a multiparty system. If we wanted to be more specific and to categorize this party system through the prism of Blondel (1990) or Sartori (2005), it would require a separate paper. However, although it had most of the characteristics of moderate pluralism, we cannot unambiguously categorize it this way. The number of parties in the parliament in its first five electoral terms oscillated between six and seven.



## 5. Institutional Opportunities of the Parliamentary Opposition: How Did They Evolve?

In this section, the institutional opportunities of the Slovak parliamentary opposition are reviewed, covering the period of 1994–2012. The section is further divided into sub-sections devoted to particular opportunities. Of course, when looking at the usage of these opportunities by the opposition, the wider context matters. More specifically, the opposition operates in the parliament, in close interaction with the government. Then, the character and overall behaviour of the government is not unimportant. As it will be seen later in the paper, based on our findings, it may be concluded that the opportunities that the opposition has at its disposal reflect the overall character of the government. This premise may be formulated based on the mutual relationship between the legislative and the executive in the setting in which a majority government exists almost exclusively. Therefore, if a government forms the parliamentary majority, it can, in many ways, affect the distribution of powers between it and the opposition by strengthening or reducing the opportunities of the opposition concerning any actions taking place in the parliament. Basic information about the governments in the period under review is shown in Table 2.

## 6. Parliamentary Rules of Procedure

The Rules of Procedure are the most important institutional rules regulating any actions taking place in the parliament and potentially influence the distribution of powers within it. As long as they have the form of law, any MP can propose an amendment and thus influence the distribution. Having said this, based on an analysis of all the amendments, it can be concluded that in most of the cases, it was not the opposition that proposed such amendments. In fact, it was primarily the government (more specifically, members of government parties). This can be seen not only in the case of amendments that passed, but also in those that were proposed, but not passed. When considering only those amendments which passed, most were passed consensually, having the support of both the government and the opposition. Nevertheless, there are three exceptions worth our attention. The first case was a consideration of the initial law on the Rules on Procedure itself. In fact, the passage of this bill in 1996, after the National Council of the Slovak Republic had already existed for more than three years, is not a coincidence. The first draft on the Rules of Procedure was proposed in 1995, while the Rules of Procedure of the former Slovak National Council were still in force. During the consideration of this bill, there were so many amendments proposed that all other considerations were postponed so that MPs could take all the amendments into account (Chovancová, Láštic 2012). Another consideration of the bill took place on 27 September 1996. The government as a whole, or members of its parties, proposed thirty-three amendments; thirty of them were passed. This proportion is significantly different in the case of the opposition. Its MPs proposed fifty-seven amendments; however, only eleven of them passed. When voting on the bill as a whole, 121 MPs were present, seventy-seven



voted for it, twenty-two voted against, twenty-one abstained, and one did not vote. With the exception of one MP, all members of governmental parties voted for the bill. On the other hand, only eight opposition MPs supported the final draft. This reflects significant disagreement of the opposition with its content; this was primarily caused by the fact that most of its amendment proposals were refused. However, the story of this important law did not end there. President Kováč brought it back to the parliament. Another vote took place on 24 October 1996. This time, eighty-one MPs voted for it, twenty-six voted against, and eighteen abstained. Among the MPs voting for the bill, seventy-one were members of governmental parties; ten were members of the opposition party KDH. As a result, the bill was enacted into law and entered into force on 1 January 1997 (Chovancová, Láštík 2012). Considering that at least a small part of the opposition supported this bill, the vote on it may be interpreted as semi-consensual.

**Table 1: Political Parties discussed in the paper**

Political Party	Name (English translation)
ANO	Alliance of the New Citizen
DÚ	Democratic Union
HZDS	Movement for a Democratic Slovakia
KDH	Christian-Democratic Movement
KSS	Communist Party of Slovakia
MK	Hungarian Coalition
SaS	Freedom and Solidarity
SDK	Slovak Democratic Union
SDKÚ-DS	Slovak Democratic and Christian Union – Democratic Party
SDĽ	Party of the Democratic Left
Smer-SD	Direction – Social Democracy
SMK-MKP	Party of Hungarian Coalition
SNS	Slovak National Party
SOP	Party of Civic Understanding
ZRS	Union of Labor of Slovakia
<i>Source: Author.</i>	

Afterwards, in the first five electoral terms of the National Council, eighteen amendments of the Rules of Procedure were passed. As stated above, most of them were passed consensually. Based on a content analysis of these amendments, it may be concluded that the smooth passage of these amendment proposals through the legislative process was due to their uncontroversial content. In this context, Tsebelis (1990) distinguishes between two

categories of amendments of Rules of Procedure: those related to efficiency, and those related to redistribution; the former make action in the parliament more efficient and the latter redistribute power inside of it. Applying this division in the case of the Rules of Procedure of the National Council, findings indicate that sixteen of the amendments were of an efficiency-related or technical character, and only two were of a redistributive character. In other words, sixteen amendments influenced the content of the Rules of Procedure in a manner that made the particular activities of the parliament more effective or, in most cases, these changes were absolutely marginal and of a technical character, since they were primarily amendments of different legislation, only secondarily changing specific part(s) of the Rules of Procedure (Chovancová, Láštík 2012). When we look at the way these amendments were passed in the parliament, all of them were passed consensually, with the strong support of the government as well as of the opposition; some of them were passed semi-consensually, when at least some of the opposition parties supported the amendment together with the government's MPs (Chovancová, Láštík 2012).

However, this is not true when we look at the two amendments of the Rules of Procedure with a redistributive character, both of which passed without agreement between the government and the opposition. The first of them, Law 86/2000, passed during the first Dzurinda government, changed the Rules of Procedure to a significant extent. This amendment was proposed in August 1999 by MPs from the government parties SDE, SMK-MKP and SOP. It primarily focused on regulations of the legislative process. Specifically, it abbreviated the time for consideration of a bill. For instance, it stated that oral presentation of the procedural motion could take only one minute, and that the National Council could, based on the proposal of its Speaker, vote on the closure of the ongoing consideration of a bill. Moreover, when considering procedural motions, voting on them would be done in an express way. Another change provided by this amendment was that it would no longer be possible to respond to a point of order with another point of order. Another important change was that, based on a proposal by at least two parliamentary party groups (later referred as 'PPGs'), the National Council could pass a resolution on the length of consideration of a particular item on its session agenda. This amendment also brought changes to the order of speakers during the consideration of a bill, and changed rules on the creation and dissolution of any PPG. When voting on the proposed amendment on 16 February 2000, the government maintained party discipline – every single one of the MPs voted in favour. On the whole, eighty-four MPs voted; only two of them were against – both members of the opposition. Nevertheless, the entire PPG of HZDS skipped the vote, as well as eleven out of the thirteen members of SNS' PPG. In this way, it cannot be considered a consensus since the support of the opposition was very limited. Moreover, although it may be seen, to some extent, as an effective amendment, it is important to stress that this law restricted the opportunities of opposition MPs to express their opinions when considering bills, since the parliamentary majority could, for example, close the consideration of any bill or restrict the time for it. In sum, this amendment should be considered to have redistributive effects as well.

Another redistributive amendment of the Rules of Procedure was passed during a different electoral term and in completely different circumstances. To start from the beginning, in the fourth electoral term, the Radičová government was formed by three centre-right parties – SDKÚ-DS, SaS and KDĽ. One of the issues linked with this government was definite-

ly the controversial vote on the Attorney General. The government started the discussion about its common candidate for this position in October 2010 (Chovancová, Láštic 2012). However, the first vote on the Attorney General was a clear example of the disunity of the government PPGs, since members of SDKÚ-DS voted for one candidate, Hrivnák, while the other PPGs voted for Mišíková. As a result of this, most of the votes were cast for the third candidate, ex-Attorney General Trnka, who was supported primarily by the opposition party Smer. Insofar as an absolute majority is needed in such a vote, the result of the vote was inconclusive. Afterwards, the same situation happened again in the second round. Before the third vote, the entire government agreed on a common candidate, Čentěš. Although the government PPGs together had seventy-seven votes, he received only seventy-four. The next round of voting also failed to resolve the situation, as Trnka received seventy-one votes, leaving seventy-nine votes that were not cast for any candidate (Kern, Petková 2011). Finally, as a recipe to overcome the government's inability to vote consistently, four MPs from the government PPGs proposed an amendment of the Rules of Procedure changing this vote from secret-ballot to an open one. This proposal, in addition to other changes, stated that any secret-ballot vote in the National Council can be changed to an open vote if a resolution regarding this vote is passed by a minimum of fifteen MPs. The vote on this amendment took place on 5 April 2010. All of the MPs were present; seventy-nine voted for and seventy-one voted against. All members of the government PPGs as well as two independent MPs voted in favour of it; all opposition MPs voted against. The amendment proposal was later vetoed by Slovak President Gašparovič, then passed once again and finally entered into force, after another inconclusive vote on the AG position took place. However, the amendment was also sent to the Constitutional Court for review by acting Attorney General Tichý. While considering it, the Constitutional Court suspended the execution of this law. As a result, yet another vote was taken, this time on 17 June, and still using a secret-ballot procedure. Trnka, however, withdrew his candidacy before the vote. Finally, with a single candidate being nominated, Čentěš was officially elected to the position of Attorney General (Kern, Petková 2011).

Three things can be concluded from this story. First, this process reflects one of the main characteristics of Radičová's government – its inability to act and vote cohesively, which later led to its collapse when a vote on the European Financial Stabilization Mechanism was attached by Prime Minister Radičová to a vote of confidence. At the time, SaS, one of the government parties, voted against the ESFM despite its leading to the government's fall. Second, this story is not only about the problems of Radičová's government. After the AG vote, President Gašparovič refused to appoint Čentěš. This remained unchanged until the end of Gašparovič's electoral term in June 2014. Because of this, the Constitutional Court received several constitutional review motions, all of them initiated by opposition MPs. This state remained the same after the election and appointment of the new president, Kiska. According to the Constitution and the decisions of the Constitutional Court, the president is obliged to consent to the candidate for the Attorney General elected by the National Council and appoint the National Council's nominee. In fact, it does not explicitly say that the president must do so under any conditions, but this is a subject for a different article. We should rather focus on the third fact that may be concluded from this complicated process – that it was the first time that the government amended the Rules of Procedure despite

**Table 2: Basic information about the government in Slovakia, 1994–2012**

Electoral term	Government Parties	Number of seats	Prime Minister	Opposition Parties	Number of seats	Basic Information about the Government
12/1994–10/1998	HZDS, SNS, ZRS	83	Vladimír Mečiar (HZDS)	KDH, DÚ, SDL, SMK	67	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Characterized by several controversial scandals: blocking a referendum in 1997, illegal faking of MP Gaulieder's resignation etc.</li> <li>• Slovakia in this period was considered an illiberal democracy (Szomolanyi 1999).</li> </ul>
10/1998–10/2002	SDK, SDL, SMK, SOP	93	Mikuláš Dzurinda (SDK)	HZDS, SNS	57	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Centre-right government that introduced reforms with the aim of strengthening the Slovak economy and opening its market to international trade</li> </ul>
10/2002–7/2006	SDKÚ, KDH, SMK, ANO	78	Mikuláš Dzurinda (SDKÚ)	HZDS, SMER, KSS	72	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Together with the first government of Mikuláš Dzurinda, the reforms and policies of this government led to the eventual entrance of Slovakia into the European Union and NATO</li> </ul>
7/2006–7/2010	SMER, SNS, HZDS	85	Robert Fico (SMER)	SDKÚ, KDH, SMK	65	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Broad coalition of centre-left SMER, the Nationalist party SNS, and HZDS, Movement for a democratic Slovakia</li> </ul>
8/2010–4/2012	SDKÚ, SaS, KDH, Most-Híd	79	Iveta Radičová (SDKÚ)	SMER, SNS	71	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Broad centre-right coalition of SDKÚ, the liberal SaS, the Christian democrats KDH, and Most-Híd, which also accented the rights of ethnic minorities</li> <li>• Failed to complete its entire electoral term due to its collapse in 2012 after a confidence vote</li> </ul>

Source: Author, based on data from Statistical Office of the Slovak Republic.

the strong resistance of the entire opposition, and used it solely to strengthen its own position vis-à-vis the opposition in a particular situation.

To conclude, when considering who proposed the amendments of the Rules of Procedure, the fact is that in four out of five electoral terms, MPs of the opposition did not propose a single amendment of the Rules of Procedure. The fourth electoral term is an exception which is worth our attention. During the Radičová government, oppositional MPs proposed nine amendments, despite the rational assumption that such proposals would not be supported by the majority in the parliament. These proposals clearly demonstrate the disagreement of the opposition with particular institutional rules determining parliamentary activity. Specifically, the opposition repeatedly proposed amendments which would prevent obstructions by members of the government when answering parliamentary questions. This leads us to the next sections of this paper. On the other hand, the rational assumption that the government will change the Rules of Procedure, using it as a 'weapon' against the opposition to strengthen its own position and to change the rules of the game if needed, is not verified, as there were only two amendments passed in almost two decades of existence of the Slovak parliament which may be described in this way. Thus, it may be concluded that there is no conflicting relationship between the government and the opposition in the context of the parliamentary rules of the game. But will this optimistic statement be true in case of particular opportunities of the parliamentary opposition and their usage? Let us answer this question in the next sections.

## 7. The (No) Confidence Vote

As mentioned above, the collapse of the Radičová government in the fifth electoral term was de facto caused by internal conflict. In the end, the Prime Minister decided to tie a vote on the European Financial Stabilization Mechanism to a confidence vote of her government, which led to its fall. In fact, this was not the only case of a confidence vote initiated by the government itself. Another vote was initiated by the Fico government during the fourth electoral term when it was merged with a vote on the state budget. This one, however, passed smoothly. All of other such votes were initiated by the opposition through the opposite process – the no-confidence vote. While a confidence motion is passed when a majority of present MPs vote in favour, a no-confidence motion requires the majority of all MPs, not just those present; this results in the unlikelihood of the latter being passed in the parliament. As can be seen in Table 3, it does not mean such votes are not required by the opposition. However, the number of such no-confidence vote initiatives varied. The opposition was most active in the second electoral term, during Dzurinda's government, when it initiated sixteen no-confidence votes. None of them passed and, in fact, the same is true for all other no-confidence votes in the remaining electoral terms. As long as governments have a majority in the parliament, we cannot consider this surprising. However, this vote is considered an important tool of the opposition if not for strengthening accountability and potentially changing the government, then at least for pointing out important issues, potentially controversial actions of the government or its individual ministers, or reflecting its policy and overall performance.<sup>5</sup>

In conclusion, in the case of Slovakia, it can be said that the no-confidence vote has been initiated by the opposition multiple times, thus it intensively oversees and reflects the action of the government. Nevertheless, paradoxically, it was the government itself that initiated such a vote, in this case a confidence vote, which led to a fall of the government.

**Table 3: Number of confidence and no-confidence votes initiated by the government and opposition MPs**

	1st ET	2nd ET	3rd ET	4th ET	5th ET
Number of confidence votes initiated by the government	0	0	0	1	1
Number of no-confidence votes initiated by the opposition MPs	7	16	9	10	1

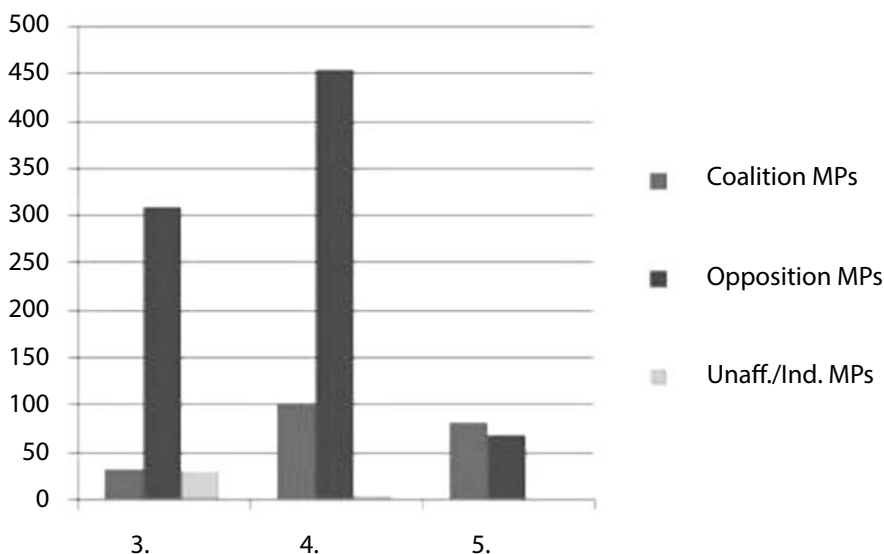
*Source: Website of the National Council of the Slovak Republic.*

## 8. Parliamentary Questions and Interpellations – an Instrument Only For the Opposition?

As Figure 1 and Figure 2 show, there has been an increasing trend in the usage of parliamentary questions and interpellations by the government in comparison with the opposition. As these figures show, while in the third electoral term, for example, opposition MPs were ten times more active than the government MPs in interpellations of the government members and two-and-a-half times more active in asking parliamentary questions, this proportion significantly declined in the fourth electoral term, when MPs from the opposition proposed four-and-a-half times more interpellations than government MPs and asked just 1.2 times more parliamentary questions than government MPs. This trend was even more dramatic in the fifth electoral term. The number of parliamentary questions asked by the opposition and the government MPs during this period was almost the same. Moreover, in proposing interpellations, governmental MPs were more active than oppositional ones. This might evoke an increased interest of the MPs belonging to the government in the particular topics and activities of their colleagues. However, the truth lies elsewhere. First, MPs of the governmental PPGs undoubtedly have other internal ways of communicating with their colleagues from the government about their activities. Moreover, the character of these questions matter in this case. If we consider all parliamentary questions asked during the fourth electoral term, when the trend of increasing activity of the government started, it will reveal a strategy by the government well worth our attention. In the whole term, there were 4,056 questions asked: the opposition was more active when asking them since its MPs asked 2,160 questions, while their colleagues from the governmental PPGs asked 1,840 questions, and forty-six questions were asked by independent or unaffiliated MPs. Despite the fact that the opposition MPs were more active than the governmental

MPs, the most active PPG overall in asking parliamentary questions was Smer-SD – one of the government parties – with 1,724 questions asked. That is almost twice as many as were asked by MPs from the PPG of SDKÚ-DS, the second most active PPG. By looking at their quantity as well as their content, it is obvious that Smer-SD had made an attempt to limit the opportunities of the opposition to have their questions answered. As SME, a major Slovak newspaper, revealed (Glovičko 2012), MPs from Smer-SD were attempting to reduce the chance that a question by oppositional MPs would be chosen from the random drawing. They did so by writing numbers of questions of almost the same content, usually being asked by more than ten members of their PPG at the same time. In effect, questions asked by the opposition MPs were rarely called to be answered, and the opposition eventually stopped attending the question time, calling it a mockery. In fact, this was not the only way Smer-SD obstructed question time. Prime Minister Fico, according to the opposition, used the question time inefficiently and dragged out his answers. During the fifteen minutes reserved for his answers, he often answered only one question. In light of this, two opposition MPs Žitňanská and Miššík proposed amending the Rules of Procedure restricting the time for answering one question to three minutes and answering a follow-up question for two minutes. Unsurprisingly, this proposal was not passed, and the number of questions answered by members of the government continued to be determined by those answering the questions. Indeed, in the fourth electoral term, from all parliamentary questions asked, only 10.5 percent were answered while, for instance, in the third electoral term, during the second government of Dzurinda, thirty percent of them were answered (Glovičko 2012).

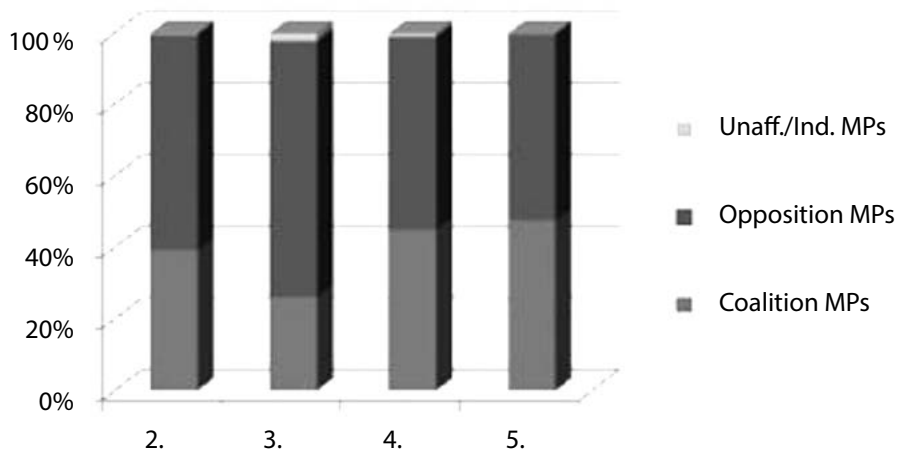
**Figure 1: Number of Interpellations proposed by government MPs, opposition MPs, and unaffiliated/independent MPs**



Source: Author, based on data from website of the National Council of the Slovak Republic.



**Figure 2: Proportion of parliamentary questions asked by government MPs, opposition MPs and unaffiliated/independent**



*Source: Author, based on data from website of the National Council of the Slovak Republic.*

Even in the sixth electoral term, we can predict that the opposition will not be more active in this way of restraining the government since Smer-SD, the party in the government, has remained very active and has continued to ask a high number of parliamentary questions, again with almost the same content. If this trend continues, it may be concluded that parliamentary questions and interpellations are no longer primarily an instrument of the opposition for reining in the government. However, it should be highlighted that this is not due to the passivity of the opposition but to an increase in the activity of particular governmental PPGs.

## 9. Parliamentary Offices – Is the Opposition Represented Adequately?

The previous section did not show positive conclusions about the restraining of the government by the opposition. Trends in selection for parliamentary offices are more positive in this sense – at least at first sight.

First, let us briefly look at the positions of Speaker and Deputy Speakers of the Slovak parliament. In the first electoral term, the Mečiar government filled the office of the Speaker and the Deputy Speakers with only its own MPs. While at its constituent meeting the parliament created four Deputy Speaker offices, the government filled three of them with its own MPs and the fourth one remained vacant throughout electoral term. This reflected an obvious attempt on the part of the government to exclude the opposition from all im-

portant parliamentary offices. This is even more visible when we look at chairmanship in parliamentary committees.

As can be seen in Figure 6, in the first electoral term, none of chairmanship posts in the parliamentary committees belonged to the opposition. In the second term, the government had eight times more committee chairs than the opposition. In the next three electoral terms, the government had just a slightly higher number of chairmanship posts and in the fifth term, this proportion was almost one to one. This evolution undoubtedly strengthens the position of the parliamentary opposition when considering legislation in the parliamentary committees, especially when we take into account that the government is not formally obliged to provide the opposition with these offices. On the other hand, it should be added that, unlike the chairmanship offices, the data about all members of the parliamentary committees are not available for all electoral terms covered by the analysis. Thus, we do not have information about the proportion of their members belonging to the government and the opposition separately. In fact, the government usually has the majority in most of the parliamentary committees that provides it with the control of the output of their activities. Considering, for instance, the constitutional committee which is basically the most influential in the legislative process, the government has always had a majority of members. In addition, the institution of dual membership in parliamentary committees potentially allows the government to have the majority in all parliamentary committees even without having such a number of MPs. Thus, in fact, the opposition does not have an opportunity to influence the output of the legislative process through the action of the parliamentary committees which consider all proposed legislation and can make significant changes to it before it is passed by the parliament as a whole, since the opposition is in the minority in the committees as well.

**Table 4: Distribution of chairmanship offices in parliamentary committees**

	Government	Opposition
1st electoral term	14	0
2nd electoral term	16	2
3rd electoral term	11	8
4th electoral term	12	7
5th electoral term	10	9

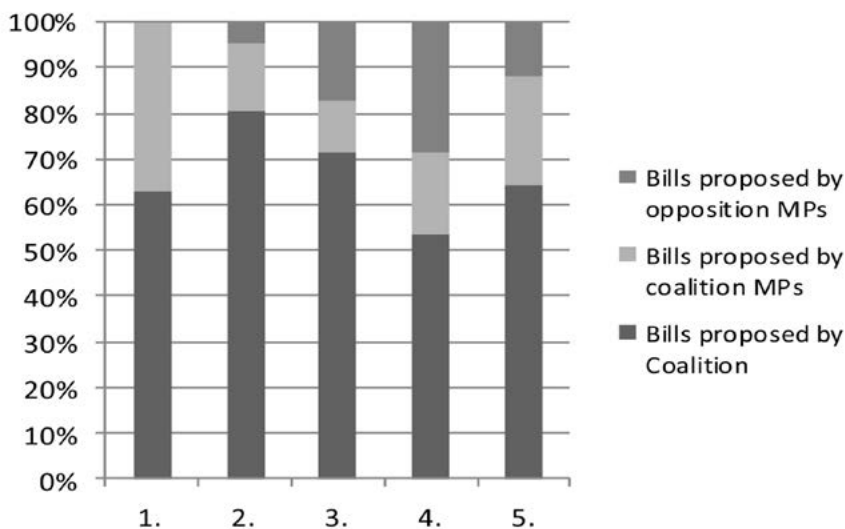
*Source: Author, based on data from website of the National Council of the Slovak Republic.*

## 10. The Opposition in the Legislative Process

The most important institutional opportunity of the parliamentary opposition for how to affect the output of the legislation passed in the National Council is definitely the right to legislative initiative, which belongs to every individual MP. In the analysis of bills proposed in the Slovak parliament, I differentiate between bills proposed by MPs belonging to the

opposition, MPs belonging to the government, and bills proposed by the government as a whole. As can be seen in Figure 3<sup>6</sup>, the level of activity of the government and opposition MPs varied during the period covered by the analysis. Nevertheless, in case of all of five electoral terms, it was the government that dominated among actors initiating the legislation, followed by individual government MPs; MPs belonging to the opposition were less active. While in the second electoral term the opposition was the least active and proposed only 4.5 percent of all bills, in the rest of the electoral terms under review, oppositional MPs were significantly more active. According to findings, in the third term, they proposed 17.25 percent of all bills, in the fourth term it was 28.5 percent, proposing significantly more bills than MPs from the government parties. However, this trend did not continue in the fifth electoral term when the opposition proposed only eleven percent of all bills.

**Figure 3: Proportion of bills proposed by the government as a whole, government MPs, and opposition MPs in percent from all proposed bills**

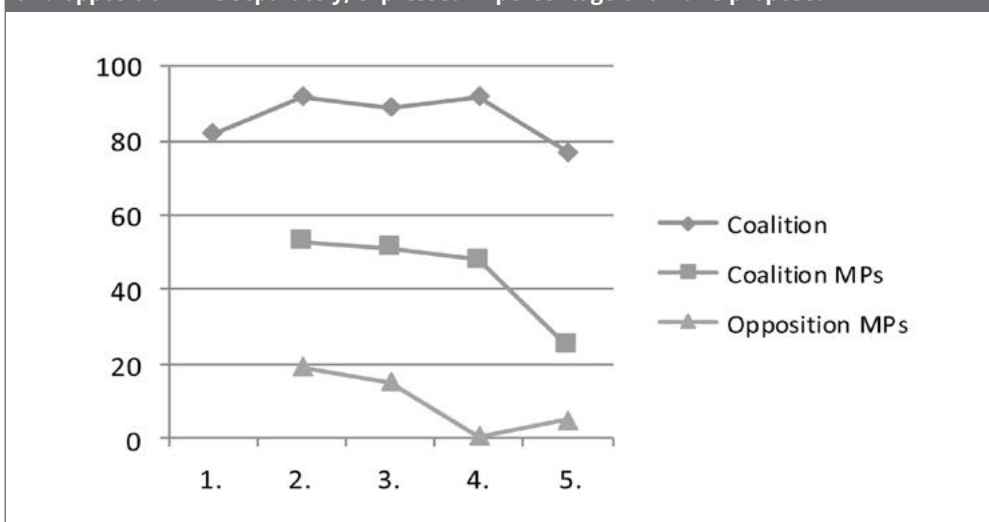


*Source: Author, based on data from website of the National Council of the Slovak Republic.*

The level of activity of the individual MPs is, however, only one factor of the potential influence of the opposition on the output of the legislative process. It, of course, matters whether opposition MPs are active and propose bills despite the high probability of not having the support of the parliamentary majority. But there is also another important indicator – the level of success of proposed bills during voting. Based on an analysis of roll-call voting on proposed bills in the parliament, it may be concluded that there is a significant difference between the success of bills proposed by the government or its individual MPs, and those proposed by the oppositional MPs. As Figure 4 indicates, bills proposed by the government were passed more than 75 percent of the time in all electoral terms under review. This finding is not surprising at all, due to the tradition of majority governments and

their cohesive voting behaviour in the period covered by the analysis. Thus, the success of bills proposed by MPs belonging to the government parties may be seen as low; in three out of five electoral terms, it oscillated around fifty percent and in the fifth electoral term, it only reached twenty-five percent. One possible explanation for this proportion is the content of these bills, since they may be related to the programmatic priorities of individual governmental parties which were not included in the official priorities of the government and which not all government parties agreed on. Furthermore, the statistics reveal that the number of these bills rises in the final year of any given electoral term, when coalition agreements come to their end. Considering the fifth electoral term in particular, the relatively low level of success of bills proposed by the government MPs can be caused by long-term intra-governmental conflicts between parties having different attitudes towards important issues. This definitely was the case of SDKÚ-DS, SaS, and KDH in Radičová's government, which ultimately led to the collapse of the government caused by a lack of cohesion during the most important vote – that of confidence in the Prime Minister. To compare the relative success of the bills proposed by the opposition in the four electoral terms covered by the available data, the highest level of success occurred during Dzurinda's two governments, in the second and the third electoral term, when it reached nineteen and fifteen percent respectively. Figure 4 also shows that success of bills sponsored by opposition MPs was extremely low in the fourth electoral term, during Fico's government. In that period, it only reached 0.5 percent. It is an even more pessimistic picture if we take into consideration that in this term, the opposition was most active in proposing bills in the parliament, not only in comparison with the opposition in other electoral terms but also in comparison with the government MPs in this term. Thus, it may be concluded that in the fourth electoral term, the opposition had the lowest influence on the output of the legislative process. This success

**Figure 4: Success of bills proposed by the government as a whole, government MPs and opposition MPs separately, expressed in percentage of all bills proposed**



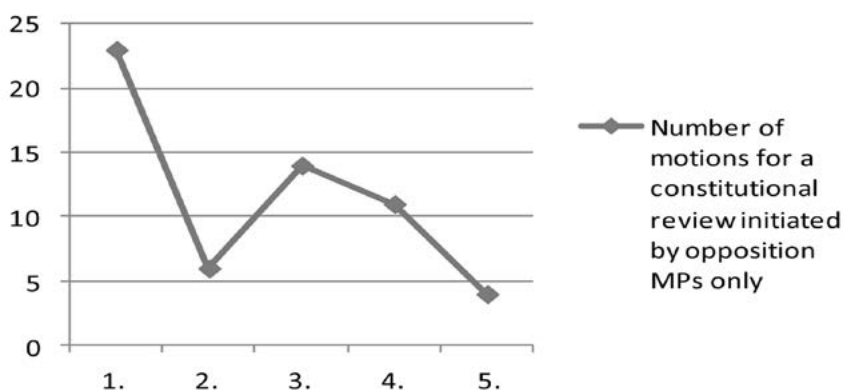
*Source: Author, based on data from website of the National Council of the Slovak Republic.*

slightly increased during the fifth electoral term, reaching five percent, which is still not high at all.

## 11. Constitutional Review – Ex Post Control of the Legislation

In Slovakia, as in many other democratic countries, there is also the possibility to influence legislation even after it has been passed by the parliament. Individual MPs may ask the Constitutional Court for a constitutional review of any legislation if they think that it may not be in accordance with the constitution. In Slovakia, this opportunity was frequently used by the opposition MPs during the analysed period, especially in the first electoral term, during the government of Mečiar. During that time, the opposition initiated twenty-three constitutional reviews. In fact, it was one of few options which the opposition could use at the time since its options for restraining the government were very limited. Due to the constitutional review, legislation of a controversial character was rejected or amended several times. As can be seen in Figure 9, there were fewer such initiatives in the following electoral terms. In this context, it should be stressed that this institutional opportunity of the opposition is very specific, as it can only challenge legislation that has already been passed. Furthermore, it can only challenge the legislation which is potentially in conflict with the constitution. This is, in fact, the reason why this happened more times in the first electoral term, when the government was not only ignoring the opinion of the opposition, but was also passing legislation of a less-than-fully-democratic character. And although the opposition is able to challenge the legislation only if it conflicts with the constitution, it is undoubtedly an important feature of overseeing the democratic principles. Moreover, it is primarily the opposition that challenges the legislation this way. Thus, its role is very important.

Figure 5: Constitutional review motions proposed by opposition MPs



Source: Author, based on data from website of the National Council of the Slovak Republic.

## 12. Is the Referendum a Useless Tool?

One specific way to initiate legislation outside of the parliament is through the use of the referendum initiative. This may be done by any individual MP and thus opposition MPs also have this power. In the electoral terms covered by the analysis, the opposition MPs used this tool three times. In the first case, in 1997, opposition MPs initiated a referendum on the direct vote for the president, while referenda in 2000 and 2004 aimed to initiate early parliamentary elections. Thus, it may be concluded that the referendum has been used by the opposition with the aim of executing its influence vis-à-vis the government. Nevertheless, it is necessary to highlight the fact that none of these referendum initiatives were proposed and passed in the parliament. In all these cases, MPs rather initiated a petition for a referendum. In fact, this was thus not an institutional opportunity belonging to individual MPs in the parliament, but it was rather initiated outside of the parliament by a procedure that may be used by any Slovak citizen. In the end, none of these referenda were valid since the turnout did not reach fifty percent of all eligible voters. However, the referendum process – especially the first referendum – is worth our attention, since this referendum was undoubtedly blundered by the government. At first, the government parties initiated a referendum consisting of three questions concerning the entrance of the Slovak Republic into NATO, the stationing of nuclear weapons and missile shields in Slovakia, and the stationing of a base for missile shields in Slovakia. A short time later, another referendum initiative, this time proposed by opposition MPs, asked whether people would agree with a direct vote for the president. President Kováč decided to merge these two referendum initiatives into one referendum, which took place in May 1997. The government party was strongly opposed to the question about the direct presidential election, stating that it was not possible to amend the constitution by referendum. It also asked for a constitutional review, and meanwhile attempted to withdraw this question from the referendum. Although the Constitutional Court decided that this question posed no conflict with the constitution, Minister of Interior Krajčí decided, with no legitimate reason, that the last question would not be asked in the referendum, and the referendum ballots were, based on his decision, printed and distributed with three questions only. In short, this referendum was a debacle. In some voting districts, there were ballots with all four questions distributed, in others there were only three questions, people in some districts boycotted the referendum completely. All in all, this was another example of how conditions were in Slovakia during the Mečiar's government which *de facto* blocked a referendum initiative of the opposition despite its completely legal character (Michalič 1997; Láštík 2011). In general, when we look at the referendum initiatives which took place in Slovakia in the period under review, the referendum cannot be considered to be a useful tool in hands of the parliamentary opposition. The referendum initiatives of the opposition MPs rather had the character of a citizens' initiative, so it did not take place in the parliament. But what is more important is that none of the referenda were valid. And, in fact, this will hardly change, due to the 50% quorum needed for validation. Thus, if the opposition attempts to influence the legislation or any other aspects of the decision making, it should look for more effective tools.

## 13. Conclusion

The attempt of this paper was to review all the institutional opportunities belonging to the opposition in the National Council of the Slovak Republic in its first five electoral terms and to focus on their usage in practice. The first finding is that, from the institutional point of view, these opportunities did not significantly change in the period under review. However, what did change was the level of their usage. In fact, the cause of this change was not the change in behaviour of MPs from the opposition, but the behaviour of government MPs who, especially in particular periods, attempted to limit the particular opportunities of the opposition to exercise its influence in the parliament. One example of such behaviour was the intended exclusion of the opposition from parliamentary committees in the first electoral term; other obstructions have included manipulating parliamentary questions (in the fourth electoral term), amending the Rules of Procedure, and, in the fifth electoral term, when the governing coalition attempted to 'secure' the election of the preferred candidate for the Attorney General. Another example is the extremely low level of success of bills proposed by opposition MPs (in the fourth electoral term, when it reached less than one percent).

Opportunities of the parliamentary opposition may be divided into those with a potential influence on the legislative process (legislative initiative and constitutional review) and those used for restraining the government (vote on confidence or no-confidence, interpellations and parliamentary questions), while the referendum potentially has both of these effects. A specific institutional opportunity is amending the Rules of Procedure since it effect may lead to redistribution of power between the opposition and the government. However, the opposition only attempted to change these rules with this aim in the fourth electoral term. On the other hand, in the second and the fifth electoral terms, it was the government that proposed and enforced such amendments limiting the position of the opposition in a particular way.

To sum up, considering all the opportunities belonging to the parliamentary opposition, it may be concluded that the opposition was active in using them during the entire period under review. It is also true that the opposition did not attempt to change the set rules in a significant way, with the exception of nine proposals of amendments of the Rules of Procedure in the fourth electoral term. Thus, the rational assumption that the opposition would actively attempt to expand its institutional opportunities was not verified.

To some extent, the opportunities of the opposition for restraining and influencing the government might be seen as limited. In fact, this is true for all parliamentary democracies with a tradition of majority governments. On the other hand, this does not mean that they are not important – they are a vital aspect of the legislative-executive relations in the parliamentary democracies. Moreover, the character of the opportunities and the level of their usage significantly vary even in one country – and specific patterns in this evolution create a picture of the character of the relationship between the government and the opposition. Similarly, this does not mean that exercising these opportunities nor analyzing them is not worth doing. This topic is so complex that there can be further research conducted – it might be, for instance, interesting to continue the research on the role of the parliamentary opposition in Slovakia in agenda-setting and policy-making processes.



Having said that, it is not only the parliamentary opposition that can provide oversight of the government. The same has been done by media and the non-governmental sector. Thus, in future research, it might be interesting to focus on the role of media and NGOs in reflecting the action of the government. Specifically, it would be interesting to observe their activities revealing particular government scandals or reviewing its policies.

## Footnotes:

1. See, for instance: Müller (1993), Ilonszki (2007), Millard (2008), Steinack (2011).
2. In this paper, word 'opportunities' is used rather than the word 'rights' since there are no exact and explicit rights the parliamentary opposition in the Slovak Republic is provided with.
3. All of them available online on in archive of the National Council of the Slovak Republic. As will be seen in the paper, some of them, in case of the first and the second electoral term are, however, missing once they are not available in any sources.
4. Which was the parliament of Slovakia in Czechoslovakia. It existed until October 1st 1992 when it was replaced by the National Council of the Slovak Republic.
5. Besides confidence and no confidence votes, there is also an Investiture vote institutionalised in Slovakia. In case of all five governments, an Investiture vote was passed in parliament since all of them had majority of votes in the parliament.
6. In case of the 1st electoral term, there was no division between government MPs and opposition MPs in available data. Thus, red category covers all bills proposed by any MPs.

## References:

- Blondel, Jean. 1990. 'Types of Party System.' In: *The West European Party System*. Ed. Peter Mair. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 302–310.
- Dahl, Robert. 1966. *Political Oppositions in Western Democracies*. New Haven: Yale University Press.
- Damgaard, Erik and Jensen, Henrik. 2013. 'New Perspectives on Parliamentary Power – Some Nordic Evidence.' Working paper 1/2013, *Center for Voting and Parties, Department of Political Science, University of Copenhagen* ([http://cvap.polsci.ku.dk/publikationer/arbejdspapirer/wp12013/WP1\\_2013\\_New\\_Perspectives\\_on\\_Parliamentary\\_Power\\_Some\\_Nordic\\_Evidence.pdf/](http://cvap.polsci.ku.dk/publikationer/arbejdspapirer/wp12013/WP1_2013_New_Perspectives_on_Parliamentary_Power_Some_Nordic_Evidence.pdf/)).
- Glovičko, Ján. 2012. 'Poslancom Smeru diktujú, čo sa spýtať Fica.' *Sme.sk*. 1st August 2012 (<http://www.sme.sk/c/6480220/poslancom-smeru-diktuju-co-sa-spytat-fica.html>).
- Helms, Ludger. 2004. 'Five Ways of Institutionalising Political Opposition: Lessons from the Advanced Democracies.' *Government and Opposition* 38, no. 1, 22–54.
- Helms, Ludger. 2008. 'Studying Parliamentary Opposition in Old and New Democracies: Issues and Perspectives.' *The Journal of Legislative Studies* 14, no. 1–2, 6–19.
- Christiansen, Flemming Juul and Damgaard, Erik. 2008. 'Parliamentary Opposition under Minority Parliamentarism: Scandinavia.' *Journal of Legislative Studies* 14, no. 1–2, 46–76.
- Chovancová, Katarína and Láštic, Erik. 2012. *Inštitucionálna adaptácia Národnej rady Slovenskej republiky: Analýza zmien rokovacieho poriadku*. Bratislava. Unpublished manuscript.
- Chytilík, Roman and Šedo, Jakub, eds. 2009. *Volební systémy*. Praha: Portál.
- Ilonszki, Gabriela. 2007. 'From Minimal to Subordinate: A Final Verdict? The Hungarian Parliament, 1990–2002.' *Journal of Legislative Studies* 13, no. 1, 38–58.

- Kern, Miroslav and Petková, Zuzana. 2010. 'Koalícia zradcom nedala šancu' *Sme.sk*. 7th December 2010 (<http://www.sme.sk/c/5672823/koalicia-zradcom-nedala-sancu.html>).
- Kern, Miroslav and Petková, Zuzana. 2011. 'Minúta po minúte: Prezident Čentéša zatiaľ nevymenuje.' *Sme.sk*. 17th June 2011 (<http://www.sme.sk/c/5941359/minuta-po-minute-prezident-centesa-zatial-nevymenuje.html>).
- Kopecký, Petr. 2001. *Parliaments in Czech and Slovak Republics: Party Competition and Parliamentary Institutionalization*. Aldershot: Ashgate.
- Kopecký, Petr. 2005. 'Power to the Executive! The Changing Executive-Legislative Relations in Eastern Europe.' *Journal of Legislative Politics* 10, no. 2–3, 142–153.
- Kopecký, Petr and Spirova, Maria. 2008. 'Parliamentary Opposition in Post-Communist Democracies: Power of the Powerless.' *Journal of Legislative Studies* 14, no. 1–2, 133–159.
- Koß, Michael. 2011. 'The Evolution of Parliamentary Minority Rights in Western Europe.' *American Political Science Association Annual Meeting*, 1. – 4. September 2011. Seattle, USA.
- Kubát, Michal. 2010. *Politická opozice v teorii a stredoevropskej praxi*. Praha: Dokořán.
- Malová, Darina and Dolný, Branislav. 2010. 'Parlamentná demokracia: vzťahy exekutívy a legislatívy.' In: *Parlamentná demokracia. Parlamenty vo svete a na Slovensku*. Ed. Darina Malová. Bratislava: Univerzita Komenského, 7–29.
- Láštic, Erik. 2011. *V rukách politických strán: Referendum na Slovensku 1993–2010*. Bratislava: Univerzita Komenského.
- Leška, Dušan. 2013. 'Hlavné etapy formovania systému politických strán na Slovensku po roku 1989.' *Sociológia* 45, no. 1, 71–88.
- Michalič, Sergej. 1997. 'Referendum: od petičnej akcie cez zmanenie k rozhodnutiu prokurátora.' In: *Slovenské referendum '97: zrod, priebeh, dôsledky*. Eds. Grigorij Mesežnikov and Martin Bútora. Bratislava: Inštitút pre verejné otázky, 43–82.
- Millard, Frances. 2008. 'Executive–Legislative Relations in Poland, 1991–2005: Institutional Relations in Transition.' *Journal of Legislative Studies* 14, no. 4, 367–393.
- Müller, Wolfgang C. 1993. 'Executive–Legislative Relations in Austria: 1945–1992.' *Legislative Studies Quarterly* 18, no. 4, 467–494.
- Norton, Philip. 2008. 'Making Sense of Opposition.' *Journal of Legislative Studies* 14, no. 1–2, 236–250.
- Shapiro, Ian. 1996. *Democracy's Place*. Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press.
- Sartori, Giovanni. 2005. *Parties and Party Systems: Framework for Analysis*. Colchester: ECPR Press.
- Steinack, Katrin. 2011. 'Two Patterns of Opposition: Party Group Interaction in the Bavarian State Parliament.' *The Journal of Legislative Studies* 17, no 1, 1–26.
- Strmiska, Maximilián and Hloušek, Vít and Kopeček, Lubomír and Chytilík, Roman. 2005. *Politické strany moderní Evropy*. Praha: Portál.
- Szomolányi, Soňa. 1999. 'Tranzičná cesta Slovenska a voľby 1998' In: *Slovenské voľby '98: Kto? Prečo? Ako?* Eds. Martin Bútora and Grigorij Mesežnikov and Zora Bútorová. Bratislava: Inštitút pre verejné otázky, 9–20.
- Tsebelis, George. 1990. *Nested Games: Rational Choice in Comparative Politics*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.
- Zubek, Radoslaw. 2011. 'Negative Agenda Control and Executive-Legislative Relations in East Central Europe, 1997–2008.' *Journal of Legislative Studies* 17, no. 2, 172–192.