

What do parties share on Facebook? Comparison of Czech and Polish political parties` posts before the last two parliamentary elections

Ondřej Klapal*

ABSTRACT

The usage of social media is increasingly changing political campaigns. They enable political parties to communicate with their voters directly without an intermediary. They give them their own media platform to actively mobilize their supporters, to interact or to communicate with them and to present their political programme and thus to set the public agenda. The aim of this paper is to describe what types of content Czech and Polish political parties shared during last two parliamentary elections campaigns (which took place in 2010 and 2013 in the Czech Republic, and in 2011 and 2015 in Poland) on Facebook and to explore if they used it to mobilize supporters and to present their political programme. The attention which Czech and Polish political parties paid to Facebook between last two parliamentary elections has increased. All analysed parties, except of the Czech social democrats and Polish peasants, shared more Facebook posts during 4 weeks before the last elections than they had shared in the previous ones. However, by using content analysis and 6 categories of posts I have found that Czech and Polish parties did use Facebook to mobilize their supporters and to present their political programme only in a limited scale. Just about one tenth of posts were used to mobilize parties` supporters or to interact with them. However, there was an increasing trend in this category by the Czech parties and decreasing trend by their Polish counterparts. The share of posts that presented political programmes was 10-16 %. This share remained roughly the same in the Czech Republic, but in Poland it grew by about a half. Most of the posts (57-68%) informed about campaign events, appearance of party representatives in media, party slogans etc. To sum it up, Czech and Polish parties mostly used their Facebook pages as a channel informing about other party activities, rather than as a tool to mobilize their supporters, to interact with them or to gain support for their political programme.

Keywords: Social media; Facebook; Czech Republic; Poland; election campaigns