

Beyond democracy – The model of the new Hungarian parliamentary electoral system (Part 2)

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Last Sunday the government submitted the detailed draft law on the reform of the parliamentary electoral system. In the following post – with the help of the model we devised during the summer –, we analyze the new electoral system, focusing in particular on the political effects of the new set-up of single-seat constituencies, based on the electoral district-level results of the general parliamentary elections in 2002, 2006 and 2010.

We are of the opinion that as a result of the one-sided manipulation of single-seat constituency borders and other detailed rules, the electoral system proposed in the draft law substantially limits the scope for any change of government. The new system would allow that almost exclusively in the case of a decisive opposition victory that this sort of social support can be reflected on the level of representatives' mandates.

This is therefore not a democratic electoral system.

According to our calculations, in both 2002 and 2006, this system would have contradicted the majority will of voters at that time, and would have led to a rightwing governmental majority. This is a result of the growing influence of single-seat constituencies on the final outcome in the new system as well as of the transformation of the compensatory system. These have been redrawn in line with the Fidesz-KDNP party alliance's current political interests. The ratio and characteristics of stable leftwing, "swing" and stable rightwing constituencies have been decisively altered by the reform. In the new system, stable leftwing constituencies have larger populations, become isolated, predominantly metropolitan islands, whereas stable rightwing constituencies grow stronger both in number and in their supporting structure; "swing" constituencies take on a markedly more rightwing character. Between 1990 and 2010, these "swing" constituencies did in fact tilt between support for the left and the right. If the new system stays the same, the "new swing" constituencies will be much more advantageous for the rightwing political forces.

Another unacceptable element in the parliamentary electoral reform is its opposition to small parties, which worsens the electoral chances of LMP and Jobbik. The expected shortening of the time period available for the collection of recommendation slips (Hungarian form of pre-candidacy electoral qualification), the disproportional raising of the number of necessary recommendation slips and the “winners’ compensation” all diminish the outlook for smaller nominees within an electoral system whose majority-prone nature already rewards larger parties. According to the calculations of our model, in 2010 the sum of party list votes cast for LMP and Jobbik jointly would still be under 80% of the winners’ compensatory votes for Fidesz-KDNP. As there is no separate compensatory list, such votes will have a decisive effect on the ratio of party list votes. Until now, the purpose of the compensatory system has been to grant better representation for losers. In the new system, this type of compensation is self-extinguishing on the one hand, whereas on the other hand it takes mandates away from smaller parties. This further contributes to the disproportional character of the electoral system. We find its generally majority-prone character acceptable, as we consider the choice of electoral model a question of values, but any further strengthening of this aspect, absurdly by way of the compensatory system, worsens the outlook for heterogeneous democratic representation and brakes the rule of equal right of citizens to vote (because the voters of winning candidates would have bigger influence on candidates) If the new electoral system were in place in 2010, according to our calculations, Fidesz-KDNP would have received 71% of mandates (141 mandates) in a parliament with 199 MPs even without “winners’ compensation”; the flawed compensatory system raises this to 76%, which amounts to 152 mandates. Just as a reminder: in the current parliament, the ruling party alliance holds 68% of mandates.

Below, we first summarize our view of the whole of the new electoral system, and then – after introducing our methodology – we present the finding of our analysis in detail.

We are convinced that the parliamentary electoral system in place for the past 20 years has only caused minimal problems. Its structure and effect mechanisms could have been transplanted into a smaller Parliament with only minor modifications. One of the authors expressed his opinion on this issue earlier.* A new system could have remained mixed, maintaining its somewhat majority-prone character, but to a much lesser degree than the version of the draft law recently submitted.

* Please see: Csaba Tordai: *The reform of the electoral system*. Fundamentum, Az emberi jogok folyóirata, 2010, vol. 13. no. 3., 27-38 p., as well as Csaba Tordai: *Majority, proportional or mixed system?* Élet és Irodalom, LIV. évf. 51-52. szám, 23 December 2010.

The problem is not with the majority-prone character

We would like to point out that we consider the choice of electoral model itself not a question of democracy, but a question of values, as well as of course an issue motivated by political interests. As a result, our objection to the new system lies not in the fact that – as a result of the planned reform – it will become much more majority-prone in nature than the system in place over the past 20 years. This would benefit any larger parties, party alliances, thus helping the establishment of a stable parliamentary majority with the ability to govern. We feel the same way about the number of rounds, the existence of the compensatory system and the issue of entry thresholds. If implemented in a circumspect manner, the choice of electoral system need not influence the democratic nature of politics. In fact, we are ready to accept the political legitimacy of even the fact that with the necessary backing of the parliamentary majority a government wishes to influence the whole of the party system, including the relative weights of larger and smaller parties as well as the strategy for forging alliances, in line with its own political interests.

Regarding “stop signs”

Earlier we outlined certain “stop signs”, the overlooking of which would lead to voters’ expression of their collective wills suffering irreparable damages. As we put it in our first post on the parliamentary electoral reform: “[...] *an electoral system can basically be considered democratic if (i) it does not include any regulations that obstruct voters’ chances for the expression of their will, (ii) it does not include any regulations that substantially oppose or distort the majority opinion and voters’ will, and (iii) if it is free of any elements that translate votes into mandates in the exclusive favor of only a given party / party alliance.*”

We feel that the draft law just submitted does not meet these criteria.

At this stage of the reform, certain “stop signs” remain in place simply because the draft law does not contain any reassuring solutions with regards to these issues. Examples include the decision to keep the 5% parliamentary threshold in place, the problem of demarcating unmanageably large single-seat constituencies, as well as the question of correcting the differences in population sizes between single-seat constituencies.

We established a “stop sign” that should be looked at not in terms of the focused examination of electoral laws but in light of the whole of the constitutional structure. In this regard it can be said that since the government did not introduce a clearly proportional model, an ungovernable situation within the new constitutional *status quo*

would not be a result of the interplay between numerous cardinal laws and the fact that almost no one in Parliament would have the necessary constitution-amending majority because of the proportional system. Instead, the concept set forth implies that after the new constitution comes into force, such an ungovernable situation would endanger only governments with a simple majority, since as a result of the majority-prone character of the electoral system, winning two-thirds parliamentary majority would itself become much easier, as it would require fewer votes.

Due to the government's erratic legislative practice and the fact that it was not able, or did not wish, to present its whole electoral concept along with procedural rules in a comprehensive manner, we remain oblivious of specifics regarding the regulation of campaign advertising. A possible ban on paid advertisements would substantially limit the publicity of campaigns (because of both the oligarchic nature of public sphere nowadays as well as the political bias of public media), and curb any ability to reach voters without an interlocutor.

Some procedural-type "stop signs" exist regarding which the draft law submitted last week does not contain any provisions, whereas the previously publicized concept was clear in its wording. The nomination period is shortened in a futile and anti-small party manner, so this "stop sign" too seems overlooked. We feel the same way about the compulsory and legally precluding institution of preliminary registration mentioned in the concept, which remains an alternative of the system of recommendation slips. In light of the Hungarian population registry system, we consider any attempt, by way of compulsory pre-election registration, to legally preclude domestic Hungarian voters from exercising the franchise to be undemocratic and constitutionally unjustifiable.

The draft law ultimately overlooks several "stop signs". Compared to the decrease in the number of single-seat constituencies, the number of necessary recommendation slips is raised to an disproportional level (from 750 to 1 500 whereas there were 176 and now there will be only 106, the acceptable level would be around 1 000-1 200) . This ruins the qualification chances for smaller parties, and is thus unacceptable. The "winners' compensation" method – explained later in this article – to be introduced distorts the arithmetic behind compensatory mandates in an impractical and anti-small party way. Even without this step, the role of fragmentary votes within the new parliamentary electoral system would decrease anyway; however, this should also be considered an issue of the choice of model. Nevertheless, the compensatory system that compensates for itself, which goes as far as to ruin the compensatory chances of smaller nominating organizations, is unacceptable. Two of the authors agreed with extending the franchise to Hungarian citizens without permanent residency status (given necessary guarantees).

Still, the fact that they are not allowed separate (individual and/or party list) mandates, and their votes are instead mixed into votes cast for country-level party lists, leads in part to the disintegration of their exerted pressure, in part to their uncurbed influence in polarized political situations (as maximum mandates are not set). This is not an adequate solution. Finally – and we consider this the most serious problem of the new system – the demarcation of single-seat constituencies has been undertaken in line with political considerations which obviously improve the chances of the parties currently in power. This implies gerrymandering in the interest of one party on a national level. This doesn't even exist in the United States.

Only the incumbent governing parties benefit from polarized situations

Just as electoral systems are sometimes changed, so do political parties, party systems and voters themselves. One cannot devise an electoral system that always benefits just one party. That is exactly one can neither overplay nor downplay the importance of our model's results.

The results cannot be overemphasized because we cannot know anything about the future. The opposition in the political elite will eventually react to the changes made in the system, and voters will also learn the new rules of the electoral game. Just as Jobbik established its voting base almost out of the blue, or as Fidesz could attract voters' groups in 2010 that had never supported it before, or as Ferenc Gyurcsány was able to widen the base of support for the leftwing in 2006, so in the coming elections there is a chance that a new political paradigm could overwrite the current *status quo* of party politics.

Despite the above, one should not downplay the significance of the modeled results. Although a change of government could occur in the new electoral system, this can only happen if the democratic opposition has wide, uniform support. However, the new system was designed in such a way that the incumbent government would not lose its position in the case of medium-level support and a taut political competition, even if the majority of voters want a change of government. This amounts to ignoring the will of the majority on a systemic level.

What should be changed for it to be democratic?

The minimum step would be to get rid off the compulsory domestic registration process for non-minorities, to extend the time period available for collecting recommendation slips and to ensure that the number of necessary recommendation slips rises proportionally to the decrease of single-seat constituencies. Anti-small party features and

the self-extinguishing “winners’ compensation” should be phased out of the compensatory mechanism, and the border demarcation of the 106 single-seat constituencies must be more balanced. Finally, it would be fortunate if the governing forces would find solutions in sync with both the constitution and international treaties regarding the issue of voting rights for Hungarian citizens without permanent domestic residency status.

The political consequences

After the new constitution comes into force, the competency of the Constitutional Court will significantly change: the right to *actio popularis*, which until now could be initiated by anybody, will cease to exist; instead, citizens can only turn to the body if any of their rights set forth in the fundamental law have already been infringed upon. Regarding the electoral law, any such legal infringement could only occur at the time of the next general parliamentary election, meaning that any legal process at the Constitutional Court can only be initiated following the election itself. However, the new constitution leaves the door open for a quarter of MPs (97 representatives) to turn to the Constitutional Court even if no such infringement of rights has yet occurred. Given the current political makeup of the parliament, this could only happen if representatives of MSZP, Jobbik and LMP are all initiators of such a motion.

Since the governing parties have a legitimate constitutional majority, the time may come when the adversely affected opposition parties are faced with no choice but to boycott the debate and voting of the discussed law, to engage in domestic protest and to organize voters’ expression of their will, to ensure the exertion of international pressure, and finally even to declare that – from a political point of view – the incumbent political system and parliament that is set up by means of this electoral system is considered illegitimate.

These are unmistakable messages regarding the crisis of the Hungarian constitutional system, and such radical measures can be justified based on the notion that while the new system does not necessary *rule out* the possibility for a change of government, it does *substantially limit* any such possibility.

The model’s methodology

Calculations are always based on party list votes in the first round, even in the case of individual mandates. Although this rules out the vote-influencing effect of personal judgment from the model (since such acknowledgement usually leads to a candidate

receiving more or less votes than his / her party on the party list in the same constituency), it leads to more exact estimations of nominating organizations following the regrouping of polling districts and towns. This leads to a more reliable model even if we are of course aware of vital political developments between the first and second rounds of elections in the past decades, and the publicized final outcomes are only settled after the second round of voting.

The changes in polling districts also influence our model to some degree. Hungary is made up of approximately 12 thousand polling districts, which were somewhat redrawn in autumn 2010 by the competent authorities. Nevertheless it is of course the case that results from, say, the elections in spring 2010 are based on the old organization of polling districts. In the cases where the former and the current polling districts fall within the same single-seat constituency, this does not create a problem. However, there are a few hundred cases where the borders of single-seat constituencies cut through the demarcation of polling districts from spring 2010. In such situations, we used estimations to determine the number of votes. All this does not substantially affect the reliability of the model.

We derive the size of the eligible population from public records of the local governmental elections held in autumn 2010. Since then, there have necessarily been changes in the population size of given towns and cities, but these changes are statistically negligible. For any town or city, we considered the structure from autumn 2010 to be decisive, although there were obviously some minor changes in this area as well.

If the Parliament accepts the draft law recently submitted, then our country will have a more majority-prone, mixed, one-round parliamentary election system with a weak compensatory element. In our model we calculated that no ethnic minority receives a preferential mandate, and so the number of distributable party list mandates amounts to 93.

The geographic characteristics of the new single-seat constituencies

In the first part of our analysis we examined, and found correct, the division of single-seat constituencies between counties. During the past 20 years, significant changes occurred in the population sizes of old single-seat constituencies, and such vast differences endanger the quality of democracy. The new electoral system reassuringly resolves this issue. In no single-seat constituencies is the population markedly over or underestimated, and the few more extreme or exaggerated figures can be justified on the

basis of electoral geography. The geographical size and number of towns in each single-seat constituency is also adequate and in sync with the strict guarantees set forth in the draft law.

A minor mistake, which nevertheless costs at least one mandate, is the fact that while two single-seat mandates are assigned to Miskolc (a stronghold of the left), Debrecen (a stronghold of Fidesz) receives three. There is a difference between the two cities in terms of the size of the voting population (138,808 and 167,341 people, respectively), but this is not such a vast difference as to warrant solving the issue of mandate numbers in this way.

A far greater problem is the issue of demarcating single-seat constituencies in cities with county rights and the county capitals of given counties. In our previous model, we argued that polling districts in cities with county rights should be drawn according to the same guidelines. We claimed the following: *“[i]f a city with county rights has to be divided into single-seat constituencies, or if certain suburbs / outskirts have to be added to a divided city with county rights for it to become a single-seat constituency, then the goal should be the establishment of single-seat constituencies of a similar structure. Setting up separate »city center« and »outskirts plus suburbs« single-seat constituencies should be avoided. It is best if all single-seat constituencies contain »city centers«, »outskirts« and »suburbs«. This would lead to more homogeneous single-seat constituencies from a sociological point of view.”* In the submitted draft law, one cannot recognize any common guidelines for distributing mandates, since Szeged (Socialist stronghold) and Pécs (traditional city of the left) are divided based on a different logic than Győr and Debrecen (both right wing cities), for example. We experienced that in the case of cities with county rights, the ones that have in the past 20 years been traditionally considered more balanced or more leftwing, the demarcation of single-seat constituencies has been done in accordance with the political interests of Fidesz-KDNP.

The recently devised system of single-seat constituencies for cities with the rights of a county should be corrected based on uniform principles. In this regard, our problem lies not with the fact that the new single-seat constituencies in these cities are not leftwing enough, but with the fact that they have been set up to serve rightwing interests, without any clear underlying guidelines. If such clear principles existed, it would necessarily lead to more balanced polling districts in cities with county rights.

A few typical examples

Looking at the new distribution of single-seat constituencies, one can draw the conclusion that there are certain parts of the country where the new system is correct

from a geographical, sociological or political point of view. Such countries, however, traditionally lean towards the right, and their chief towns are small to mid-sized (meaning they only contain one single-seat constituency). Examples include Somogy, Tolna, Vas and Zala – in these cases, the principles of fairness and rightwing interests overlap one another.

It can generally be mentioned that the designers of the new system aimed to uphold the *status quo* of single-seat constituencies which have often proved themselves rightwing in the past 20 years. This holds particularly true in places where the Hungarian far right achieved only relatively poor or mediocre results in 2010. Examples of such single-seat constituencies are the mountainous districts in Buda, parts of Pest which lean towards the right, the more rural areas of Bács-Kiskun county, as well as the traditionally more conservative regions of Veszprém county.

In other parts of the country, the situation is worse. Following a detailed examination of single-seat constituencies certain uniform manipulation methods become apparent.

As for left-leaning and stable leftwing areas, a typical method has been to set up single-seat constituencies which will be relatively stable leftwing enclaves in the new system as well. In such cases, the regrouping of certain leftwing polling districts shored up leftwing support to an even greater degree, so that such single-seat constituencies will remain bastions for the Hungarian leftwing in any future election more balanced than the one in 2010. Such methods were employed in the new electoral district in Angyalföld (Budapest 07.), Szeged (Csongrád county 01.) and half of Nyíregyháza (Szabolcs-Szatmár-Bereg county 01.).

In several cases, experience shows that the previously relatively stable leftwing single-seat constituencies have been diluted with rural, right-leaning polling districts, thus ensuring that these constituencies produce “swing” mandates, leading to shifting allegiances or pro-right results according to the prevailing winds of grand politics. Kazincbarcika and its environs (Borsod-Abaúj-Zemplén county 04.) is a good example of this, where the rather pro-Socialist city was also given the infamous Edelény (ethnic conflicts, strong support for the far right, deep poverty, etc.) and its surrounding areas.

Several tough battles in the parliamentary elections held in 2006 are associated with the traditionally “swing” regions in the old system of single-seat constituencies. Most of these single-seat constituencies are divided and regrouped by the new reform, thus making them lean further towards the right. Typical cases include Várpalota and the surrounding territories in Veszprém county, where MSZP won in 2006, but which has now been grouped with the stable rightwing Balatonfüred and its region. The same holds

true for “swing” single-seat constituencies from 2006 such as Gyöngyös, Szentes, Szigetvár and Kisvárdá.

The political characteristics of the new single-seat constituencies

The workings of the new model are clear in the 2010 elections. Fidesz-KDNP would have won every single new single-seat constituency, if the country had voted according to the new electoral system last year. The two single-seat constituencies won by the left in Angyalföld would also be lost, and all individual mandates would have gone to one party alliance. We must note that this is predominantly a result of the general mood in 2010 for changing the government, and not a direct result of the new single-seat constituency system. The real problems become apparent with the modeling of the more balanced elections in 2002 and 2006.

Running our model with the election results from 2006 leads to the following results on the level of single-seat constituencies. MSZP would have won 47, and Fidesz-KDNP 59 mandates; the former amounts to 44.3% of 106 individual mandates, the latter to 55.7%. In real life, on the level of individual mandates MSZP and SZDSZ jointly received 107 mandates, whereas Fidesz-KDNP got 68. The first is 60.8% of 176 individual mandates, while the latter is 38.6%.

It is evident that the new single-seat constituencies were redrawn in a way so that the result would be completely changed with regards to individual mandates: a party which received far less votes in the election would 17 percentage points more mandates.

If we analyze the modeled results of the 106 single-seat constituencies from 2006, the shift in the proportion and character of stable left, stable right and “swing” single-seat constituencies is apparent. Although there will be stable left-leaning single-seat constituencies in the new system as well, but the average size of their voting population is far above the average (80,428 people), whereas in stable right-leaning constituencies this is 74,639 people. This goes to show that leftwing regions have been overstrengthened and isolated. Meanwhile, they made sure that “swing” constituencies become pro-rightwing, since using the results from 2006, we would find more rightwing “swing” single-seat constituencies than leftwing ones, whereas in reality in 2006 the leftwing generally fared better in “swing” constituencies.

The chart below portrays the old, 176-constituency strong system’s actual division of mandates from 2006. Taking a glance at this and at the previously shown map in line with the model, it is clear which counties are the greatest losers of this sort of politically

motivated demarcation of single-seat constituency borders: Békés county, Győr-Moson-Sopron county, Hajdú-Bihar county, Pest county and Veszprém county.

If we run the results of the model for 2002, then MSZP would receive 51, while Fidesz-KDNP-MDF would win 55 mandates, with the former holding 48.1%, and the latter 51.9% of mandates. Therefore, in the new system, the left would have won more individual mandates in 2002 than in 2006. As previously discussed, our model calculates with votes from the first round. As a reminder, in 2002 the first round resulted in a relatively balanced competition with a slight lead by MSZP, but in the second round several single-seat constituencies were changed and won by the party alliance of Fidesz-KDNP-MDF. This is important because in the final outcome, MSZP and SZDSZ together received 81 mandates (46%), while Fidesz-KDNP-MDF got 95 mandates (54%). If we compare this to the individual results of the new electoral system for 2002, the difference seems small. But it is in fact very large.

This is due to the fact that the ratios of votes were very different in single-seat constituencies in the first round. If we study how many places either large bloc was able to win a mandate already in the first round, or in how many places it could emerge as the front-runner, MSZP and SZDSZ won in 100 locations (56.8%), with Fidesz-KDNP-MDF in just 76 (43.2%). What does this imply? Since our model calculates only with the results of the first round, the redrawing of single-seat constituencies to shift political bias towards the rightwing is apparent, since although MSZP and SZDSZ were the frontrunners in 100 of a total 176 constituencies, they would receive less than a half, 51 of 106 mandates in the new system. If our model were to include the outcome of the second round of voting, a clear rightwing majority would arise if single-seat constituencies were modeled using the data for 2002 according the new system.

The modeled results of single-seat constituencies and the illustrated examples evidently show that for a large part of the county the goal in the minds of the legislators designing the new system was not to transplant the majority will of previous parliamentary elections onto a map with fewer single-seat constituencies, but rather to meet the demands of the Fidesz-KDNP party alliance's interests in many areas. The development of leftwing enclaves, the dilution of certain stable leftwing constituencies into "swing" constituencies, the breaking up and regrouping of single-seat constituencies considered "swing" districts before 2010, as well as increasing the proportion of stable rightwing single-seat constituencies are all steps that go beyond necessary corrections and fair redrawing to exerting an evident political bias.

The draft law does not *revise* the disproportional nature of the previous system of 176 single-seat constituencies by establishing only 106 such mandates; instead, it decisively *tilts* them towards Fidesz-KDNP.

The summarized model of the new electoral system

The new electoral system is a more majority-prone mixed system than the mixed system in place over the past 20 years. There are several reasons for this. First off, while in the previous system all party list mandates (210) gave the majority of parliamentary mandates (386 in total), individual mandates (106) are more numerous in the new system of 199 mandates (53.2%). The greater the proportion of individual mandates in a mixed system, the more majority-prone character the system takes on. Another reason for this pro-majority nature is that there is no separate quota or group for compensatory mandates; instead, compensatory votes are directly added to votes cast on national party lists. As a result, fragmentary votes enter the race alongside party list votes. Previously there were a minimum of 58 compensatory mandates within the 210 party list mandates; no such limit exists in the new version. The third reason for this pro-majority shift is the system of “winners’ compensation”, which leads to the distribution of 93 party list votes becoming more favorable for larger parties.

Apart from individual mandates, we calculated with party list mandates, including the compensatory effects, but not with mandates for representatives of ethnic minorities.

For 2010, we get the following results. Fidesz-KDNP receives 173 mandates (86.9% of 199 representative seats), MSZP gets 21 mandates (10.6%), Jobbik wins 18 mandates (9%) and LMP 8 (4%). It is evident how the new system’s pro-majority character further strengthens the current 68.1% mandate majority to almost nine-tenths of mandates.

Modeling the cumulative outcome of the 2006 elections we see that MSZP and SZDSZ jointly receive 96 mandates (48.2%), Fidesz-KDNP 97 mandates (48.7%), and MDF would have gotten 6 mandates (3%). This contradicts the fact that the left-liberal bloc had an obvious parliamentary majority (54.4% of mandates), and that MSZP’s own faction within parliament was larger itself (49.2%). If the new system had been in place in 2006, then Fidesz-KDNP would have gotten the largest faction despite the decisive victory of the left, and they would surely have received the mandate to form a government with MDF.

Looking at the final results of the 2002 election, the mandate distribution is the following: MSZP and SZDSZ would have jointly received 103 mandates of 199 (51.7%)

and Fidesz-KDNP-MDF 96 mandates (48.2%). Still, as we highlighted regarding the discussion of individual mandates, our model calculates with the outcome of the first voting round, when MSZP still had a clear lead in terms of single-seat constituencies, and this lead only resulted in the well-known close results in the second round. This is important because it is evident that the new designation of single-seat constituencies turns an MSZP-SZDSZ lead in the first round into a slight Fidesz-KDNP-MDF majority on the level of single-seat constituencies. If we consider the effects of the rightwing's resurrection as experienced in the second round, the cumulative outcome of the elections in 2002 would also have tilted to serve their interests.

Furthermore, one must note that our model did not take into account votes cast by those living outside Hungary's borders. If we take just 170 thousand external votes supporting Fidesz-KDNP and mix them in with the ballots cast for national party lists in accordance with the draft law, then that would also sway a further one or two mandates.

On anti-small party and self-compensating compensation

Following the detailed presentation of the model's results, let's briefly review the effects of the "winners' compensation" system on the results of 2010 in our model.

In 2010, MSZP would have had 990,429, Jobbik 855,437 and LMP 383,877 fragmentary votes, if the new system had been in force. Fidesz would not have received any losers' fragmentary votes, since according to our model it would have won all 106 single-seat constituencies in a one-round system, which would have thus resulted in 1,601,749 fragmentary votes. This in itself is more than the number of party list votes LMP and Jobbik received together in 2010 (383,877 and 855,437 adds up to 1,239,314).

If we analyze the results calculating with votes cast in 2010, without "winners' compensation", solely based on losers' fragmentary votes and the modeling of party list votes, we find that compared to the results from 2010 presented above, MSZP would have received 5, Jobbik 4 and LMP 2 more mandates, while Fidesz would lose 11 mandates in 2010 through the elimination of "winners' compensation" (thus decreasing its 76% mandate majority to 71%). This majority-prone character stems from the greater proportion of individual mandates and the non-separated nature of compensatory mandates.

It could have been done differently

We prepared our model calculation in the summer of 2010 to prove that it is possible to redraw single-seat constituencies on Hungary's electoral map so that even in a different electoral system, without overwriting its mandate-distribution characteristics, we would still receive results where the majority will of voters is in line with the political outcome. Based on public information at the time we did not include the votes of those living abroad, and we presupposed a 200-MP strong parliament with 110 single-seat constituencies.

Taking into consideration the population changes of the past 20 years, one must concede that the correction of voting districts (regardless of the specific number of individual mandates) would only be fair if in certain parts of the country (especially in Budapest and Pest county) the number of single-seat constituencies would be reformed to the detriment of Hungary's leftwing parties. The reason for this, to put it simply, is that the population decreased in multi-mandate regions where the leftwing has traditionally been strong. Therefore, over the past two decades the distribution of single-seat constituencies has become somewhat disadvantageous for the Hungarian rightwing. However, the legitimate correction necessary is much smaller than what the government is currently planning.

It would be possible to create a new system of single-seat constituencies in Hungary that would follow clearer principles, without any sort of gerrymandering to overwrite the majority will of the people, which with regards to the last three elections would have resulted in the same outcome. Because of changes in population, the majority-prone mixed electoral system's mandate allocation methodology, as well as the geographic distribution of support for the two large parties this in 2002 and 2006 would have meant that the governing coalition's mandate majority would have narrowed. Whereas in 2006 MSZP-SZDSZ actually had a 54.4% parliamentary mandate majority, our model would have guaranteed them a majority with just 51.5%.

And while the mandate figures of our summer model are minimally different from the ones finally submitted, it can be stated that it would have been possible to create an electoral system with 199 mandates (including 106 single-seat constituencies), which would have ensured the parliamentary majority of previously governing parties. The reason for this is that in total, MSZP and SZDSZ received more party list votes in both 2002 and 2006 than their opponents, and – in fact – MSZP alone had more party list votes in both 2002 and 2006 than Fidesz.