

## Summary

This rigorous thesis has been dealing with the direct election of mayors in Europe. Three hypotheses were postulated in the introduction. The aim of the thesis was to find out, if the direct election of mayors causes an increase in the voter turnout, if it comes to cases of divided majorities and if those are causing issues with local system functioning. Lastly I tried to find out, if the direct election is a trend, which is going to be spreading further. The factors of voter turnout and divided majorities were analysed in seven case studies: England, Norway, Croatia, Poland, Italy, Austria and Germany.

In every case study I have compared the voter turnout in the mayoral elections with the turnout in the council elections. In the countries, where the election term was synchronised, the difference in the voter turnout was rather low. In most countries voter turnout in the mayoral elections was identical or lower than in the election of the councils. Only in North Rhine-Westphalia in Germany was the turnout in the mayoral election higher and the difference in the two turnouts was greater. Further I have analysed the voter turnout before and after the introduction of the direct election of mayors. Only in Italy and Croatia was the voter turnout shortly increased after the introduction of the direct election of mayors. In other analysed countries, there was no increase in the voter turnout.

Based on Bogumil and Holtkamp (2005) and Copus (2004) I have, for the purpose of this rigorous thesis, defined six mayoral-council constellations. I have specified divided majorities as a case, when the mayor is not a member of the political party which has the absolute or relative majority in the council. In accordance to academic literature, existing research and my own data I have found out, that there are cases of divided majorities but they are rather infrequent. Neither in any existing research, nor in my analysis was the percentage of cases with divided majorities higher than 12 %. Problems with system functioning could be found in some Italian municipalities in the 1990's. In most of the analysed municipalities there was a possibility to reach a compromise between the political actors.

I have defined the direct election of mayors according to Heinelt and Hlepas (2006) and Schaap et al. (2009) as a vote, when the mayor is elected directly by the voters and his nomination is not influenced by other political actors, as for example the council or the government. Also a leader of the winning list in the council election can be considered as directly elected. In practice

the difference between the direct and indirect election of mayors is blurred. Based on the academic literature, existing research and information provided by official authorities of the European countries, I have found, that in eighteen of forty-four European countries mayors are elected indirectly. The northern countries are not planning the introduction of the direct election of mayors in the near future. The debate about the introduction of the direct election has been taking place in three countries: the Czech Republic, Serbia and Ireland. It is possible, that Serbia and Czech Republic would be inspired by their neighbouring countries and introduce the direct election of mayors. It is questionable if the countries where the election of mayors is quasi-direct (France, Belgium, part of Spain) will introduce the direct election of mayors.

