ARETERA
PUBLIC AFFAIRS

WHAT'S NEXT FOR CZECHIA AFTER THE PARTIAL SENATE ELECTIONS?

Key Takeaways from the Czech Senate Elections Run-Offs

21 October 2026

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The second round of Czechia's partial Senate elections, held on 16–17th October, reinforced the opposition's majority in the upper house of parliament while confirming their defeat of Prime Minister Andrej Babiš' senior coalition ANO movement. With 27 of the 81 Senate seats up for election, ANO entered the second round with 13 candidates but failed to win any of the contested run-off seats. Turnout reached 21.12%, the highest since 2010 and almost 4.5% above that in the same districts six years ago. Babiš called the result catastrophic for the movement, noting that its regional committee will discuss a new strategy for reforming the party, while insisting the government's course would not change. The centre-right Mayors and Independents (STAN) won more seats than any other party, with 10 of the 27 contested seats. The conservative Civic Democrats (ODS), together with centre-right TOP 09, remains the strongest Senate club and is expected to keep the Chairmanship.

Viewed alongside the results of the municipal elections held on 9–10th October, the results point to a major structural challenge for ANO. The ruling party still performs strongly at national level and finished first in several cities, but it has been weakened in its traditional urban and regional bases and is now struggling to recruit and support credible candidates. In parallel, ANO's coalition partners did not fare any better. The ruling parties won none of the 27 seats, the first time this has happened since the Senate was created in 1996. The Eurosceptic Freedom and Direct Democracy (SPD) fielded 17 candidates, none of whom reached the run-off, while the right-wing Motorists for Themselves nominated no candidates. Accordingly, the coming months will decide whether Babiš's planned reset for ANO will be substantive, both inside the movement and in terms of his relations with the coalition parties.

For businesses, the immediate implication is continuity at the national level as the government's policy agenda remains unchanged. Accordingly, the more significant shift is political. A weakened ANO organization, an assertive opposition in the Senate, and a former Chief of the General Staff in the upper house together suggest that policy debates in the coming months may become more contested, particularly on defence, security and public finance.

Below, Aretera takes an extensive look at the aftermath of the Czech Senate elections.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

In Czechia, the Senate (upper house) holds the power to review, amend or delay legislation passed by the Chamber of Deputies (the lower house). While the Chamber of Deputies has more political weight and can override a regular Senate veto with an absolute majority, it cannot bypass the Senate on constitutional amendments, election laws, or international treaties. In addition to the legislative relevance, the partial Senate election, through which 27 of the 81 Senate seats were in play, is a major indicator of domestic political shifts following last year's parliamentary election, which marked ANO's return to government.

The senior coalition ANO failed to win any of its 13 run-off contests and lost its one defended seat in Karviná, a district regarded as its traditional stronghold. Its run-off candidates kept only 67% of their first-round votes, while their rivals kept 90% and won all 13 contests, the weakest retention for ANO since 2014. Babiš attributed the defeat to regional organizations and to members who assumed that the ANO brand was sufficient to win. He promised changes but gave no details and said the government's agenda would not change. This comes alongside fellow coalition SPD's failure: the party fielded 17 candidates, none of whom reached the run-off, while the Motorists did not nominate any candidates.

The centre-right STAN is arguably the election's largest winner after securing 10 of the 27 seats in the election, the most of any party and its first Senate victory in six years. STAN leader Vit Rakušan said the party wants to be the principal challenger in the next parliamentary elections in 2029. In parallel, the conservative ODS has kept its Senate lead after winning seven seats, two more than it defended. Together with TOP 09, it forms the strongest Senate club and the chairmanship is expected to go to Miloš Vystrčil, the incumbent President of the Senate.

THE NEW COMPOSITION OF THE SENATE

The Composition of the Upper House of Parliament		
Party/Alliance	**Seats Won**	**Projected Number of Senators**
STAN & allies	10	18
ODS & allies	7	30 (together with TOP09)
KDU-ČSL	3	12
TOP09	2	30 (together with ODS)
ANO	0	15
SPD	0	0
Motorists for Themselves	0	0
Pirates & allies	0	5
Independents/Other	5	1
Total	**27**	**81**

Source: Czech Statistical Office

BABIŠ' PROMISED RESET

The Prime Minister said that the movement had not expected to win no seats at all and described the outcome as a catastrophe. ANO's candidates received 33% fewer votes in the second round, which he attributed to weak mobilization. In many districts, ANO candidates received support from voters of the two other governing parties, and even from voters of the alternative political scene, which made the defeat more striking. The party's leadership will now aim for a new electoral strategy: the promised reset is most likely to fall on the local and regional entities in cities where ANO had traditionally built its base. In the 9–10th October municipal elections, ANO took 15.4% in Prague, down from 19.3% in 2022, and 18.2% in Brno (the second largest city), down from 20.5%. In the municipal elections, ANO still finished first in six of the 13 regional capitals, two fewer than in 2022. Observers suggest that the reckoning will focus on the cells that were supposed to deliver crucial cities and on whether the movement's regional leaders will be replaced.

NEW SENATORS: THE STAN INTAKE & KEY NEWCOMERS

STAN has used the run-offs to claim the leadership of the opposition. Its 10 Senate seats are the most of any party in this cycle, having won the Senate elections for the first time in six years. STAN leader Vit Rakušan said the party wants to be ANO's main challenger, both in the Senate and in the next parliamentary elections. He was explicit that this should not become a contest with other opposition parties, adding that STAN knows where voter preferences lie in parliamentary polling and wants to focus on its own growth.

Key new STAN senators include Martin Půta, a newcomer who is implicated in a corruption case, which could create credibility issues for the party. Půta said that he will give up his Mayoral post as Liberec governor and waive his Senate immunity so that criminal proceedings can proceed. His case may be used by opponents to test STAN's positioning on combatting corruption and the party will need to manage this risk.

The most prominent newcomer is Karel Řehka, a retired army general who served as Chief of the General Staff from July 2022 until the end of June. Řehka says he wants to focus on defence and security in the upper house, while his election gives STAN a credible security profile at a time when defence is high on the national agenda. Other notable winners include Jiří Padevět in Prague's District 1, David Smoljak of STAN in Prague's District 9, who received one of the highest vote shares of the cycle, and Petr Štěpánek of STAN in Příbram, who received the most votes of any newly elected senator. Jiří Drahoš is expected to continue as first Vice President of the Senate for STAN, while STAN will not challenge ODS for the chairmanship, which is expected to remain with Miloš Vystrčil.

GOVERNMENT COALITION UNDER PRESSURE

Post-election, ANO's coalition partners face a difficult period. Neither the SPD nor the Motorists have a senator in the upper house. The Motorists' failure to enter the Prague council, combined with SPD's loss of representation in several regional capitals, suggests that the junior partners have limited local reach. For Babiš, the practical question is whether he can maintain discipline in the government while ANO is being reformed and whether the partners will seek to distance themselves from ANO before the next national contest.

The arithmetic of the upper house has also shifted. The joint ODS-TOP09 club remains the largest group in the Senate with 30 senators. Combined with STAN's 18, KDU-ČSL's 12 and the non-affiliated senators, 66 senators are in opposition to the current government, painting a fundamentally different picture from the situation in the Chamber of Deputies (lower house) where ANO and its allies hold 108 of the 200 seats. ANO's Senate club has 14 members, plus one unaffiliated senator who is counted as pro-government, and one seat remains uncertain. Constitutional law requires a three-fifths majority of those present, which means 49 votes at full attendance. The opposition bloc has a margin of 16 votes above that threshold but would fall to 47 without STAN's 18 senators. The Senate must approve every electoral law, which the Chamber of Deputies cannot override, so changes to electoral rules will require the upper house's consent.

The conservative opposition ODS, by contrast, is the strongest Senate club. Party chairman Martin Kupka described the result as a success, noting that ODS gained two seats above the five it defended. The possible rivalry between STAN and ODS, the two largest opposition forces, should be watched closely as the potential cleavage could either strengthen or damage the opposition, depending on the scale of the political competition.

LOOKING AHEAD

It is yet to been whether Babiš' planned reset for ANO is substantive, and whether the movement sets out a clear program for the next national electoral contest. A key post-election feature to monitor is the relationship between ANO and its two coalition partners, as well as the internal dynamics within the new composition of the Senate. On the opposition's side, STAN's leader has rule out a contest with other opposition parties for now but a sustained rise in the party's ratings could test that restraint as Czech politics continues to be dominated by multiple, structurally diverse formations.

For businesses, the immediate implication is continuity at the national level as the government's policy agenda remains unchanged. Accordingly, the more significant shift is political. A weakened ANO organization, an assertive opposition in the Senate, and a former Chief of the General Staff in the upper house together suggest that policy debates in the coming months may become more contested, particularly on defence, security and public finance. Observers suggest that the next parliamentary election will be decided less by the Senate result itself than by whether ANO can rebuild its local base and recruit credible candidates in the cities it has lost.

###

If you would like to schedule a discussion of this paper, please contact:
Ondrej Hynek, Country Director for Czechia, at O.Hynek@AreteraPA.com

Aretera is a leading independent public affairs advisory firm operating across Central & Eastern Europe, Türkiye, Central Asia and a growing number of global emerging markets. We advise a wide range of leading multi-national corporations, providing counsel on all aspects of public policy, public affairs and reputation management. www.areterapa.com