



THE HUNGARIAN ELECTORAL SYSTEM



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The basic principles of electoral procedure

- to safeguard the fairness of elections, to prevent electoral fraud;
- voluntary participation in the nomination, the election campaign, and voting;
- equal opportunities for candidates and nominating organisations;
- exercise of rights in good faith, according to rules;
- option and impartial adjudication of legal remedy;
- fast and authentic determination of the election results.

Right to vote

Suffrage is universal and equal; voting is direct and secret. All Hungarian citizens who are at least 18 years old and whose main residence is in Hungary have the right to vote and to run for Parliament. The right to vote is denied to those who have been under legal guardianship or are limited or incapacitated in their actions, prison inmates, and people who are under compulsory institutional care or treatment ordered in a criminal procedure.

Mandates from Constituencies and party lists

There are **386** seats in parliament, allocated by a mix of **first-past-the-post voting** (individual constituencies) and **proportional representation** (regional and national lists). A total of **176** MPs are elected **from individual constituencies**. A **maximum of 152 candidates are chosen from party lists in 20 regions** (1 capital + 19 county regions). A minimum of **58 candidates are selected from national lists**.

Nomination Process

Single-member constituencies: Each candidate must collect nominations from at least **750 voters**, authenticated by their signatures.

Regional constituencies: A regional list may be drawn up by any party (or alliance of parties) that has nominated candidates in **a quarter of the single-member constituencies** in a region. The minimum is **at least two** single-member constituencies.

National list: a national list may be set up by a party (or alliance of parties) that has set up lists in **at least seven regional constituencies**.

Regional constituency	Number of single-member constituencies	Number of mandates available per regional constituency	Number of individual constituencies in which putting forward individual candidates is a condition for putting forward a regional list
Budapest	32	28	8
Baranya	7	6	2
Bács-Kiskun	10	8	2
Békés	7	6	2
Borsod-Abaúj-Zemplén	13	11	3
Csongrád	7	6	2
Fejér	7	6	2
Győr-Moson-Sopron	7	6	2
Hajdú-Bihar	9	8	2
Heves	6	5	2
Jász-Nagykun-Szolnok	8	6	2
Komárom-Esztergom	5	5	2
Nógrád	4	4	2
Pest	16	14	4
Somogy	6	5	2
Szabolcs-Szatmár-Bereg	10	9	2
Tolna	5	4	2
Vas	5	4	2
Veszprém	7	6	2
Zala	5	5	2
Sum:	176	152	49

The same candidate may be nominated simultaneously to one single-member constituency, to one regional list and to the national list. If the number of registered candidates is smaller than the number of obtained mandates, the remaining seats shall remain vacant.

The election procedure

Balloting takes place in two rounds held two weeks apart from each other.

In the first round, each voter chooses ONE individual candidate to represent their constituency and ONE of the party lists in their region. (Voters do not vote for the national lists.)

First-round ballot for individual constituencies:

Three scenarios

- 1) **Valid and successful scenario:** The first round of voting is **valid** if **more than half** of eligible voters in the constituency cast ballots. If one candidate obtains **more than 50%** of the votes, he wins outright. The first ballot is then declared “valid and successful.” There is no need for a second round.
- 2) **Valid but unsuccessful scenario:** If more than half of eligible voters turn out, but **no candidate obtains an absolute majority**, then a second round must be held. All candidates who win **at least 15%** of the votes in the first round may stand in the second round. If no 3 candidates has won 15 percent, then the **three top vote-getters** from the first round face off in the second round.

If any candidate decides to stand down after the first round, no other candidate may take his place in the second round.

- 3) **Invalid scenario:** If half the eligible voters in a constituency fail to turn out in the first round, the ballot is declared invalid. All candidates continue on to the second round.

Second-round ballot for individual constituencies

In the second round, each voter chooses ONE candidate. This time, there is no minimum threshold: Whichever candidate obtains the greatest number of votes wins election to Parliament, provided that turnout is above 25% of eligible voters.

Two scenarios

- 1) **Valid scenario:** The second round is valid so long as at least 25% of eligible voters in the constituency participate.
- 2) **Invalid scenario:** If turnout is less than 25%, the constituency seat shall remain vacant. A by-election can be held after a minimum of one year.

Voting for regional party lists:

Validity: Turnout must be above 50% on the regional level, in order for the vote to be valid. In case of invalid first round, in the second round 25% turnout is sufficient.

Any party that fails to receive at least 5% of the nationwide vote is not eligible to win seats from the regional list voting. (The party's candidates can still win seats in individual constituencies, however.)

Anywhere from four to 28 mandates can be obtained from each party list (see table above), which means an aggregate of 152. However, for mathematical reasons, not all mandates on regional lists usually get distributed. In the past five elections, anywhere from 120 to 146 seats were distributed on the regional level. The rest were added to the national list.

Determining mandates from regional lists:

In each region, the number of valid votes for all party lists is added up (total valid votes). Then, election authorities take the total number of seats available in the region and add the number "1" to the total sum. This determines the divider for the region.

Officials then divide the total valid votes by the divider. The result is the number of votes each party list must obtain in the region in order to win a seat. This number is known as the **Hagenbach-Bischoff-quota**:

$$\frac{\text{total valid votes}}{\text{number of seats available in the regional constituency} + 1}$$

The number of votes cast for the party's regional list is to be divided by this quota. The result of this calculation is the number of seats obtained by the party in the region. The remainder shall be counted as surplus votes.

If after these calculations seats still remain vacant, then the two-thirds rule comes into play. Election officials calculate the number equal to two-thirds of the Hagenbach-Bischoff-quota. Parties shall receive seats in the decreasing order of surplus votes, until the two-thirds boundary is reached. If all of the seats available in the constituency have been filled, then, regardless of the two-thirds boundary, further seats may not be distributed. Any surplus votes shall be added to the national list. Following this calculation, any seats that still remain vacant in the region shall be added to the national list.

If a party obtained a seat due to the two-thirds rule, it was "cheaper", since it did not have the sufficient number of votes for it, so the difference between the quota and the number of votes must be subtracted from the national list votes.

Mandate-allocation in the regional constituency of Budapest (parliamentary elections, first round, 7 April 2002)

Number of seats available: 28

Hagenbach-Bischoff-quota: $1,093,194 / (28+1) = 37,696$

Two-thirds boundary: 25,131

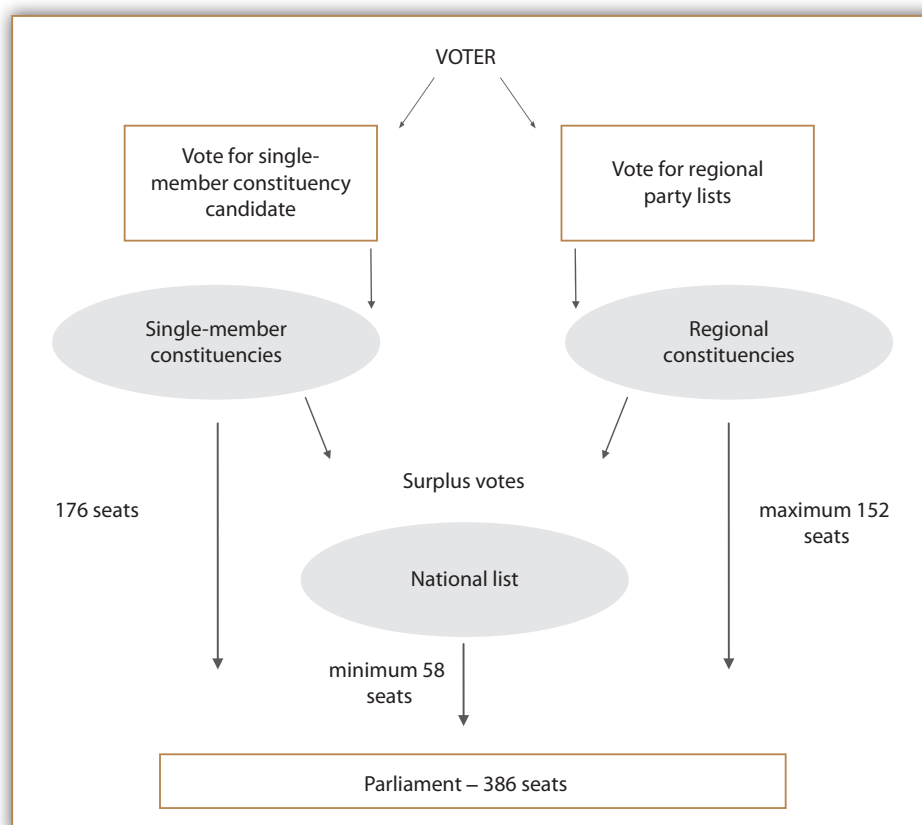
Party List	Number of votes	Votes / H-B-quota	Number of seats obtained	Surplus votes	Number of seats obtained by the two-thirds rule	Surplus votes added to / subtracted from the national list
FKgP	2,954					
Centrum	62,563					
Munkáspárt	19,636					
MSZP	482,323	12.80	12	29,971	1	-7,725
SZDSZ	104,474	2.77	2	29,082	1	-8,614
MIÉP	76,063					
Fidesz - MDF	345,181	9.16	9	5,917		+5,917
<i>Sum:</i>	<i>1,093,194</i>		<i>23</i>		<i>2</i>	
Mandates added to the national list:						3

FKgP, Centrum, Munkáspárt and MIÉP could not cross the national 5% threshold, so the votes they casted fall out from the system.

The National List: Mandate allocation

Only those parties that crossed the **5% threshold** on the national level are eligible to receive mandates from the national list. Voters do not vote for the national list directly. The role of this list is **compensation**: This is where the surplus votes are tallied, which come from two different sources:

1. Votes that were cast during the first valid round in single-member constituencies for candidates who failed to obtain a seat in Parliament.
2. Following the mandate-allocation procedure in the regional constituencies the remainder of votes (positive), or in case having obtained mandates by the two-thirds rule, the difference between the number of votes and the Hagenbach-Bischoff-quota (negative; see example in the table above).



From the national lists at least 58 mandates can be obtained, but because of the above mentioned mathematic reasons several mandates are usually added from the regional constituencies. In the five past elections 64 to 90 seats were distributed from the national lists.

For allocation of national-list mandates, the law utilizes the **d'Hondt-matrix**: A table is compiled, the first row shall be made up of the totalled surplus votes cast for the parties. Under each of the surplus votes for parties a numeric column is created, the first number of which shall be half the number of surplus votes cast for the given party, the next a third thereof, a quarter, etc. Seats shall be distributed with the help of the table (see below). The greatest number in the table shall be selected. The party in whose numeric column we find that number shall receive a seat. Next the second greatest integer shall be selected. The party in whose numeric column we find that number shall receive a seat. This procedure shall be continued until all of the obtainable seats have been distributed.

Mandate-allocation on the national list (parliamentary elections, second round, 21 April 2002)

Number of seats available: **70** (58 + 12 from different regional lists)

Serial number drawn	Party lists	Surplus votes from...		All surplus votes
		... single-member constituencies	... regional constituencies	
1	MIÉP	0	0	0
2	Munkáspárt	0	0	0
3	Fidesz-MDF	880,822	132,669	1,013,491
4	FKgP	0	0	0
5	SZDSZ	369,058	160,428	529,486
6	Centrum	0	0	0
7	Új Baloldal	0	0	0
8	MSZP	1,109,777	101,301	1,211,078

	MSZP	Fidesz - MDF	SZDSZ
1	1211078.0	1013491.0	529486.0
2	605539.0	506745.5	264743.0
3	403692.7	337830.3	176495.3
4	302769.5	253372.8	132371.5
5	242215.6	202698.2	105897.2
6	201846.3	168915.2	88247.7
7	173011.1	144784.4	75640.9
8	151384.8	126686.4	66185.8
9	134564.2	112610.1	58831.8
10	121107.8	101349.1	52948.6
11	110098.0	92135.5	48135.1
12	100923.2	84457.6	44123.8
13	93159.8	77960.8	40729.7
14	86505.6	72392.2	37820.4
15	80738.5	67566.1	35299.1
16	75692.4	63343.2	33092.9
17	71239.9	59617.1	31146.2
18	67282.1	56305.1	29415.9
19	63740.9	53341.6	27867.7
20	60553.9	50674.6	26474.3
21	57670.4	48261.5	25213.6
22	55049.0	46067.8	24067.5
23	52655.6	44064.8	23021.1
24	50461.6	42228.8	22061.9
25	48443.1	40539.6	21179.4
26	46579.9	38980.4	20364.8
27	44854.7	37536.7	19610.6
28	43252.8	36196.1	18910.2
29	41761.3	34948.0	18258.1
30	40369.3	33783.0	17649.5
31	39067.0	32693.3	17080.2
32	37846.2	31671.6	16546.4

The MSZP obtained 31, the Fidesz-MDF alliance 26 and SZDSZ 13 seats from the national list.