

# THE POTENTIAL OF USING WEBSITES FOR COMMUNICATION OF POLITICAL PARTIES: THE CASE OF SLOVAKIA BEFORE THE 2020 ELECTIONS

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## Abstract

*Technological advances and the use of websites have become mandatory tool for any political entity trying to succeed in the competition for votes. The main objective of the study is to identify the level of effectiveness of political communication on the websites of selected political parties in Slovakia. The evaluation is based on the application of the framework for functionality and effectiveness of communication of political parties and their candidates on websites. According the framework applied, the partial objectives represent the identification of information flows on website in five different ways: from the bottom up, from the top down, horizontal, asynchronous and synchronous. A structured review of the research on the issue provides a basic perspective for identifying similarities, differences, challenges, and positives, as well as the possibility to carry out a comprehensive confrontation with the study's findings. The analysis focuses on the environment of the Slovak Republic, looking at the example of eight selected political parties from the period of the last elections – 2020. The data collection used techniques according to the nature of the examined indicators set according to the framework. To evaluate the data, we apply basic statistical analyses with a comparative form of presentation. The findings demonstrate a medium to higher degree of effectiveness of the communication of selected political parties on the websites. The quality and scope of the information provided on websites is also currently related to the length of time in the party system, regardless length of representation in the parliament. According to study results the deficits primarily appear when providing answers to questions outside of published information, using an interactive form of content or more active cooperation with partner websites. The observed state of the selected cases demonstrates the one-way nature of the provision of information from the subject to the recipient.*

**Keywords:** Political communication, Political parties, Effectiveness, Website, Internet.

## INTRODUCTION

Communication plays a key role in the distribution of ideas, opinions or information. There are different forms and ways available for how to

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communicate and publish information. We observe it constantly in everyday life between individuals, groups, organizations, institutions, with the purpose being to bring specific content. It does not represent only one of the basic human ability or key managerial functions, it plays an essential role in presenting the views and attitudes of political parties towards the population. In addition to traditional communication channels such as television, radio or printed newspapers, communication on the internet currently constitutes a crucial media platform. The internet, websites and social networks are places where entities (political parties) or individuals (politicians/representatives) present their opinions, thoughts and attitudes on social and political topics. Presented here are not only the common ideological principles that unite people in political parties, but each party can communicate his content independently and at any time. The dynamic environment of the internet enables the creators of communicated content to engage users not only verbally, but also in other interactive forms. The websites also caught the dynamic development and transformed from form of Web 1.0 to 2.0. Web 1.0 represents the basic form of pages whose purpose is primarily to inform. The flow of information goes in only one direction, from creators to recipients. Web 2.0 offers opportunities for a two way information flow where recipients can actively contribute (Tóth, 2019). Through the websites, social networks and microblogs, representatives can be in touch with the audience in real time, starting at any time, regardless of the place; internet connection is all that is needed. Political parties and politicians can work not only with words but also with voice, images or video. The communication of political parties and politicians on the internet via websites and social networks became almost immediately an area of interest for science and research. One of the areas of website research is the knowledge of how effective can the communication of political parties be via the websites. Scientific strategies, procedures and methods can objectively assess and identify, according to established indicators, all available shortcomings and positives identified in the communication of political parties on websites.

The main objective of the study is to identify the level of effectiveness of communication on the websites of selected political parties in the Slovak Republic.

The methodology is based on the application of the Gibson, Ward (2000) model for measuring the effectiveness of communication of political parties and representatives on websites. The choice of the model is described in the second chapter comparing the various scientific attitudes. The source

of data for the analysis are the websites of selected Slovak political parties. The set of entities includes 8 political parties: Smer-SD, SNS, Most-Híd, ĽSNS, SaS, OĽaNO, Sme Rodina and Za ľudí. Data collection will focus on the search for indicators according to the Gibson, Ward (2000) model on websites using content analysis. The data are processed into a basic data matrix according to the specified categories. They are evaluated through tables with a description. A comparative display of political parties with each other is also added. A detailed methodological approach interpretation is presented in chapter 3.

The literature review identifies several approaches, models and frameworks for evaluating political communication on websites and social networks of political parties and their representatives. The study by Gibson, Ward (2000) is the key study that determines the entire design of the analysis. It compiles a set of indicators for calculating the effectiveness of communication of political parties on websites. Another important work, especially with regard to the area of Slovak Republic, is the study by the authors Žúborová, Žúbor (2013) which is similarly built on the analytical framework of Gibson, Ward (2000). Despite the current trend of focusing on the communication of politicians and political parties through social networks, the identification of differences in communication on websites after the last few years represents an interesting area of knowledge. This creates space for a discussion on whether this path is sustainable in the long run and whether communication in the form of a formal website, although interactive, is really losing its meaning in comparison to the more popular social network communication.

The content distribution and structure of this study is as follows: in the introduction part, the authors briefly present the concept of their scientific work. In the literature review section they interpret the state of research in the given scientific field. This is followed by the choice of a methodological procedure and the choice of a model forming the basis for the research itself. The authors then present the partial results of the performed analyses and their summary in the conclusion part of the study.

## **1 THE LITERATURE REVIEW ON THE ISSUE OF POLITICAL PARTIES COMMUNICATION FOCUSING ON THE EFFECTIVENESS OF WEBSITES**

When analysing the available literary sources, the authors consulted a wide spectrum of research studies and scientific articles focused on the issue of political communication as such. The reason for the broad focus was the

need to understand the concept of political communication, to perceive the political party/politician and the voter as two sides of the communication channel, to see similarities and differences in communication through various communication channels (website, internet, social networks, blogs, etc.). Only by understanding the development of communication channels in time and space as well as perceiving changes in the behavior of the target group (the voters), it was possible to approach the analysis of the effectiveness of the political communication on the websites. This issue can not be considered separately, therefore a lot of available studies were included within the literature research.

The available studies can be divided into three basic types. The most common available type are the analytical studies (Babac, Pdobnik, 2015; Padró, Solanet, Cardenal, 2008; Baxter, Marcella, Varfis, 2011; Crossland, Chigona, 2010; Gibson, Ward, 1998; Graham, Jackson, Breoersma, 2014; Jackson, 2007; Jackson, Lilleker, 2009; Lilleker, Pack, Jackson, 2010; Marcella, Baxter, Cheah, 2008; Nicholas, Auty, 1998; Lilleker, Jackson, 2015; Žúborová, Žúbor, 2013; Filipec, Garaj, Mihálik, 2018; Filipec, 2018; Bardovič, 2018). In this case, the authors analyze specific websites or social networks of selected political parties or political representatives. The second type of studies is devoted to the development of methodological procedures and frameworks for investigating communication in the online environment (Lappas, Yannas, 2006; Olasinde, Ojebuyi, 2017; Stieglitz, Dang-Xuan, 2013; Gibson, Ward, 2000). The authors develop complex frameworks with different groups of indicators for determining the quality or effectiveness of political parties or politicians' websites. Based on that, they can determine the degrees of efficiency and compare political parties and representatives. Gibson, Ward (2000) offer besides the elaboration of the methodological framework also an example case. The last identified study type takes the form of a review of the currently available studies that deal with political communication on the internet (Olasinde, Ojebuyi, 2017). The authors selected a set of studies through a structured literature overview. In them, they follow the current trends in methodological approaches and theoretical frameworks. The difference is that the authors do not offer their own theoretical framework or methodology. They remain at the level of an overview of available studies.

In research area of political communication on internet the highest importance is attached to the main (general) elections (Babac, Pdobnik, 2015; Baxter, Marcella, Varfis, 2011; Crossland, Chigona, 2010; Gibson, Ward, 1998; Graham, Jackson, Breoersma, 2014; Jackson, 2007; Marcella, Baxter,

Cheah, 2008; Nicholas, Auty, 1998; Stieglitz, Dang-Xuan, 2013; Filipec, Garaj, Mihálik, 2018; Gibson, Ward, 2000; Žúborová, Žúbor, 2013; Filipec, 2018). The elections to the legislative bodies become the primary concern for the analyses of political party websites and their representatives. Lincényi, Čársky (2021) provided research focused on political communication campaigning of online media through political advertising. The second most important object of research interest, according to the findings in the studies, represents elections to the European Parliament. In this case, we are not talking about a similarly strong interest as in the case of parliamentary elections. The 2009 European Parliament elections were investigated from the point of view of political communication on the internet by Jackson, Lilleker (2010) and Lilleker, Jackson (2015). In addition to research on specific elections, a third type of studies are available. The studies of this type are focused on inter-election periods. They are not oriented specifically towards the pre- or post- election period but focus on the current period relevant to the processing of the study (Padró-Solanet, Cardenal, 2008; Lilleker, Pack, Jackson, 2010; Bardovič, 2018). We dedicate a separate category to studies that offer a developed framework for the analysis of the communication by political parties and representatives on the websites. The models or frameworks they offer are either applied to specific elections (Gibson, Ward, 2000; Stieglitz, Dang-Xuan, 2013) or have a general character without exemplary application to elections or inter-election period (Olasinde, Ojebuyi, 2017; Lappas, Yannas, 2006).

The subjects to which the attention is drawn are political parties or representatives of political parties. In selected cases, the combinations of subjects are also present when political parties and representatives of political parties are analyzed at the same time. The most popular subjects are political parties (Babac, Pdobnik, 2015; Padró-Solanet, Cardenal, 2008; Lappas, Yannas, 2006; Crossland, Chigona, 2010; Gibson, Ward, 1998; Jackson, 2007; Lilleker, Pack, Jackson, 2010; Nicholas, Auty, 1998; Stieglitz, Dang-Xuan, 2013; Lilleker, Jackson, 2015; Filipec, Garaj, Mihálik, 2018; Gibson, Ward, 2000; Žúborová, Žúbor, 2013; Filipec, 2018). At a minimum, the focus is aimed at political representatives (Graham, Jackson, Breoersma, 2014). The websites combination of political parties and political representatives complements the two approaches mentioned above (Jackson, Lilleker, 2010; Marcella, Baxter, Cheah, 2008; Olasinde, Ojebuyi, 2017; Lilleker, Jackson, 2015).

A looking at the geographical distribution demonstrates an orientation primarily towards the area of Europe. To the highest extent, the available

results are from research in the United Kingdom (Marcella, Baxter, Cheah, 2008; Gibson, Ward, 1998; Graham, Jackson, Breoersma, 2014; Jackson, 2007; Jackson, Lilleker, 2010; Lilleker, Pack, Jackson, 2010; Baxter, Marcella, Varfis, 2011; Nicholas, Auty, 1998; Lilleker, Jackson, 2015; Gibson, Ward, 2000). From other European countries, we record research carried out in Croatia (Babac, Pdobnik, 2015), Spain (Padró-Solanet, Cardenal, 2008), the Netherlands (Graham, Jackson, Breoersma, 2014), the Czech Republic (Filipec, Garaj, Mihálik, 2018; Filipec, 2018) and the Slovak Republic (Žúborová, Žúbor, 2013; Filipec, Garaj, Mihálik, 2018; Bardovič, 2018). In addition to focus on only one state, we also find a comparative perspective of two selected states. Graham, Jackson, Breoersma (2014) compare the websites of political parties in the United Kingdom and the Netherlands, whereas Filipec, Garaj, Mihálik (2018) compare the Czech and Slovak parties. The Gibson, Ward (2000) composition is specific from the point of view of setting the selection of states from which political parties originate. Their comparison includes parties from the United Kingdom and Australia. As the research subjects Gibson, Ward (2000) included The Australian Labour Party (ALP) and UK Labour Party. In overall the inclusion of a higher number as two states is not present.

The number of included sample subjects varies. In our case, we didnt find studies that have exactly the same number of investigated subjects. According to the frequency, we can determine three groups of studies. In the first group, authors focus on a maximum of ten selected subjects (Babac, Pdobnik, 2015; Padró-Solanet, Cardenal, 2008; Crossland, Chigona, 2010; Žúborová, Žúbor, 2013; Filipec, 2018). The second group is set for analysis of up to 50 selected subjects (Marcella, Baxter, Cheah, 2008; Gibson, Ward, 1998; Jackson, 2007; Baxter, Marcella, Varfis, 2011; Nicholas, Auty, 1998; Bardovič, 2018). The last group includes studies with more than 50 selected cases. Jackson, Lilleker (2010) analyze a total of 61 subjects, Lilleker, Jackson (2015) 102 cases and Graham, Jackson, Breoersma (2014) examine up to 637 selected websites of politicians or political parties. To the mentioned three groups of studies divided by number, we assign one more group, which does not have a specific analysis of political parties or politicians. We have identified studies focused exclusively on methodological understanding that offer frameworks for the processing of analyses. In this case, they do not have an analytical part and no selected subjects are evaluated (Lappas, Yannas, 2006; Olasinde, Ojebuyi, 2017; Stieglitz, Dang-Xuan, 2013).

For research on the effectiveness of communication by political parties and politicians on the internet, from the point of view of internet

development, websites are used as basic platforms. The analysis exclusively of websites is carried out by Padró-Solanet, Cardenal (2008), Lappas, Yannas (2006), Crossland, Chigona (2010), Jackson, (2007), Jackson, Lilleker (2010), Marcella, Baxter, Cheah (2008), Nicholas, Auty (1998), Lilleker, Jackson (2015), Gibson, Ward (2000) and Žúborová, Žúbor (2013). In addition to websites, social networks became an important platform for political communication. Babac, Pdobnik (2015), Graham, Jackson, Breoersma (2014), Stieglitz, Dang-Xuan (2013), Filipec (2018), Bardovič (2018) focus exclusively on social networks. The advanced research works combine websites and social networks. A mixed approach is applied by Baxter, Marcella, Varfis (2011) and Filipec, Garaj, Mihálik (2018). Taking a deeper look at communication through social networks, we noted the most frequent studied platform are the Facebook (Babac, Pdobnik, 2015; Filipec, Garaj, Mihálik, 2018; Filipec, 2018; Horváth, Juza, Richvalský, Šafár, 2021) and Twitter (Graham, Jackson, Breoersma, 2014). Stieglitz, Dang-Xuan (2013) and Bardovič (2018) approach combined several social networks. They set common analytical categories for selected social networks and compare them with each other. A complex analysis is primarily carried out by Bardovič (2018), who evaluates communication on Facebook, Instagram, Twitter and Youtube.

Different research approaches are applied for the successful solution of the objectives. In general, we identify three applied research strategies: quantitative (Gibson, Ward, 2000; Žúborová, Žúbor, 2013; Bardovič, 2018; Stieglitz, Dang-Xuan, 2013), qualitative (Padró-Solanet, Cardenal, 2008; Lilleker, Pack, Jackson, 2010) and combined (Babac, Pdobnik, 2015; Baxter, Marcella, Varfis, 2011; Lappas, Yannas, 2006; Crossland, Chigona, 2010; Gibson, Ward, 2000; Graham, Jackson, Breoersma, 2014; Jackson, 2007; Jackson, Lilleker, 2010; Marcella, Baxter-Cheah, 2008; Nicholas, Auty, 1998; Filipec, Garaj, Mihálik, 2018; Filipec, 2018). The combined research strategies represent the majority of cases, while their nature is primarily comparative. Comparative perception is also used by qualitative and quantitative studies.

Qualitative studies are primarily interested in the content analysis of information published on the platform. It is not, for example, about the quantitative form of occurrence of the frequency of words but rather about capturing communicated content. Syafitri, Ikhsan (2019) analysed using of the types of jargon in communication. Jargon can affects the readers and some of the terms then become commonplace in users' everyday speech. Padró-Solanet, Cardenal (2008) analysed published posts and were able to identify the presence of contributions devoted to subject promotions,

resource searches and networking. Lilleker, Pack, Jackson (2010) focused on the limits that appear in use of interactive tools on websites. They use the case of the Freedom Bill campaign from 2009 as a basis. The description of the selected subjects allows them to qualitatively assess the main limits. Studies with exclusively quantitative research strategies rely on categorized frameworks and models with indicators. Gibson, Ward (2000) compiled a framework examining the form of communication effectiveness of politicians and political parties on websites. Their model focuses on two basic groups: information and communication flow, and page delivery. Each of the groups has a set of indicators that have their own method for measuring and recording values. The mentioned model becomes a basic framework for further research of political communication online. The studies based on it are for example Crossland, Chigona (2010) or Žúborová, Žúbor (2013). Stieglitz, Dang-Xuan (2013) follow up by creating a model focused on the investigation of social networks Facebook and Twitter. The framework design follows four main categories of data: topics, opinions, representatives and community. The framework has an exclusively quantitative form with a set strategy for selection, monitoring, analysis and evaluation of data.

Studies with combined methods use quantitative and qualitative strategies simultaneously. Quantitative indicators are the predominant elements, and qualitative approaches usually have the nature of supplementary or augmenting techniques to obtain certain types of data. Studies with combined research strategies are primarily based on unique design frameworks (Babac, Pdobnik, 2015; Baxter, Marcella, Varfis, 2011; Lappas, Yannas, 2006; Gibson, Ward, 1996; Jackson, 2007; Marcella, Baxter-Cheah, 2008; Nicholas, Auty, 1998; Lilleker, Jackson, 2015; Filipec, Garaj, Mihálik, 2018; Čábyová, Krajčovič, 2020). These studies don't use any framework or theory for the analysis of political communication but start from their own analysis design. The other form is represented by studies which adopt combinations of research strategies from applied frameworks (Crossland, Chigona, 2010; Žúborová, Žúbor, 2013; Gibson, Ward, 2000). The structure of the analysis is interested in the different form and number of indicators for evaluation of the level of communication on the website and social networks. The indicators are identical or almost similar (appearing in several studies), or unique (appearing exclusively in one study). Common indicators identified in several studies are: number and form of contributions (Babac, Pdobnik, 2015; Graham, Jackson, Breoersma, 2014; Stieglitz, Dang-Xuan, 2013; Filipec, 2018), web/social network content – contacts, email, links, blogs, search, funding, program, representatives (Baxter, Marcella, Varfis, 2011;



Lappas, Yannas, 2006; Jackson, Lilleker, 2010; Marcella, Baxter-Cheah, 2008; Žúborová, Žúbor, 2013), information provided (Babac, Pdobnik, 2015; Baxter, Marcella, Varfis, 2011; Jackson, Lilleker, 2009; Nicholas, Auty, 1998; Lilleker, Jackson, 2015), interaction possibilities on the web/ social network (Babac, Pdobnik, 2015; Jackson, Lilleker, 2010; Žúborová, Žúbor, 2013), thematic classification of contributions (Baxter, Marcella, Varfis, 2011; Graham, Jackson, Breoersma, 2014; Stieglitz, Dang-Xuan, 2013; Filipec, 2018), multimedia content – photos, videos, podcasts, stream (Baxter, Marcella, Varfis, 2011; Jackson, Lilleker, 2010; Marcella, Baxter-Cheah, 2008; Nicholas, Auty, 1998; Žúborová, Žúbor, 2013), interactivity of posts (Baxter, Marcella, Varfis, 2011; Lappas, Yannas, 2006; Jackson, Lilleker, 2010; Marcella, Baxter-Cheah, 2008; Nicholas, Auty, 1998; Lilleker, Jackson, 2015; Filipec, 2018).

The findings primarily point to two different groups of conclusions with regard to the setting of research designs. The first group of findings is related to the potential and use of websites and social networks. According to Babac, Pdobnik (2015), political parties do not use the full potential of social networks, as evidenced by a low rate of publishing posts. On the other hand, there is an increase in the use of websites and personal profiles of politicians online (Baxter, Marcella, Varfis, 2011). Criticism in the form of the absence of voters' involvement in communication and primarily one-sided communication is complemented by the findings of Crossland, Chigona (2010). Political parties do not perceive the internet as the most important way and tool to get voters, but rather, they see its potential in informing about the news and performed activities (Gibson, Ward, 2000). Marcella, Baxter, Cheah (2008) confirm the thesis of the primarily informational use of websites together with the dissemination of activities carried out within the framework of political activity. On the contrary, Lilleker, Jackson (2015) evaluated the aspect of mobilising sympathizers and members in addition to the informational function of websites positively. The web is also a opportunity for the parties to segment and microtarget the users as voters (Rusmann, 2020). The emphasis on the significance of mobilization is also confirmed by Filipec (2018) and Graham, Jackson, Breoersma (2014). Filipec, Garaj, Mihálik (2018) confirmed the presentational and informational nature of websites and social networks takes precedence over the communication of political topics. Findings focused on the differences in the web usage by political parties according to their size (Gibson, Ward, 2000) identify that the internet means gives smaller subjects a greater chance to fight with large parties. According to the findings of Nicholas,

Auty (1998), websites are more beneficial for smaller political parties. On the contrary, Jackson (2007) draws attention to the higher rate of use of websites by major political parties. They also offer broader content and better design processing. Jackson, Lilleker (2010) follow up in terms of the lower rate of the use of Web 2.0 tools by smaller political parties compared to large parties. They also showed double rate of Web 2.0 usage by political parties compared to representatives. Žúborová, Žúbor (2013) findings connect the length of political party activity in the party system and the effectiveness of website use. Parties operating for longer achieve better results in measurements compared to newer parties. The current analytical studies of party websites from the results point of view identify various findings such as: information and services on party website are focusing on addressing the general public, and there are differences between catch-all and client parties between election campaigns (Russmann, 2020); using of jargon in communication on a political party's website can affects readers, some terms become common place in everyday readers speech (Syafitri, Ikhsan, 2019); there is a lack of website tools that would enable interaction between political parties and users, there is also an absence of website possibilities to promote communication and interaction between users and political parties (Garcia-Rosales, Abuín-Vences, 2019); the presence of ideology on the websites of left and left-libertarian party families corresponds positively with the information and participation features on their websites (Vaccari, 2015); interesting and engaging features on party websites positively influence the voter or user curiosity about the website of political party (Mochla, Tsourvakas, 2020).

The second group of findings explains the main advantages, negatives and limits of the websites. Crossland, Chigona (2010) criticize the one-way use of websites or social networks. Despite the possibility of using interactive tools and involving users, political parties and representatives are not inclined towards two-way communication. Gibson, Ward (2000) also critically evaluated the absence of feedback from users. Another limit is found by Lilleker, Pack, Jackson (2009) in the direct effect of the organizational structure of the political party and the functioning hierarchy inside for using Web 2.0 functions. Problems also arise with the need to regularly update websites (Nicholas, Auty, 1998). The set of benefits begins with the perspective of a good quality political party website as a source of contacts, members, volunteers, listing all information. At the same time, it can fulfill the form of an internal database of contacts for a political party (Jackson, 2007). The website can also collect feedback from visitors in the

form of opinion polls. This method represents a form of compensation for the absence of direct two-way contact (Jackson, Lilleker, 2010). The current trend in terms of usability is the leading position of social networks over websites. Compared to websites, they achieve a higher rate of published contributions and interactions (Filipec, Garaj, Mihálik, 2018). Despite the leading positions of social networks, even websites are gradually recording more positive results in use. In addition to publishing information, they strive for better graphics and design Žúborová, Žúbor (2013). Social networks and websites offer opportunities for sharing information and multimedia content from other information sources as well. They do not have to be in the position of a specific content creator (Filipec, 2008).

## **2 MEASUREMENT FRAMEWORK: THE FUNCTION AND THE EFFECTIVENESS OF BOTH PARTY AND POLITICIAN WEBSITES**

The literature review identified several approaches, models and frameworks for evaluating political communication on websites and social networks of political parties and their representatives. The most significant and detailed model approach for measuring effectiveness is the quantitative methodology for studying the functionality and effectiveness of websites of political parties and candidates by Gibson, Ward (2000). The applicability even today is not only demonstrated by the Gibson, Ward (2000) research on the empirical example of the Australian and British Labor Party from 2000, but also by the subsequent studies, which are based on the application of the Gibson, Ward (2000) model more currently. The advantage of this model is the possibility to modify the investigated indicators and adapt them to the present. As stated by Gibson, Ward (2000), the model is open to change and able to take into account the dynamic processes that are constantly taking place on the internet and websites. They point out the possibility of adding or removing certain indicators from the model. For these reasons, for the purposes of processing and measuring the effectiveness of political communication on the websites of Slovak political parties, we use the Gibson, Ward (2000) framework.

This framework design categorizes indicators into two basic groups. The first group examines the flow of information and communication (Information and Communication Flows) and divides the indicators into five categories: downward information flow (16 indicators), upward information flow (3 indicators), horizontal information flow (3 indicators), interactive information flow - asynchronous (10 indicators), interactive information

flow - synchronous (2 indicators). The second group focuses on the analysis of website delivery (Site Delivery). In this case, the group is not divided into categories, but represents one group of eight indicators. Measuring the occurrence of indicators includes the application of various procedures. The model is based on tracking: number, number of words, total (cumulative) number of words, average number of words, presence/absence of indicator and coding by type. Tables 1, 2 and 3 show detailed descriptions of groups with categories, indicators and measurement methods of the Gibson, Ward (2000) model. We add a description and comments to each of the tables to make it clear for the readers.

**Table 1:** *Indicators for Information and Communication Flows Part I.*

<b>Downward Information Flows</b>	
Organizational history	Word count
Documents	Summed word count
Policies	Summed word count
Values/Ideology	Word count
Structure	Word count
Who is who	Average word count per person
Newsletters	Number available
Media releases	Number available
Candidate profiles	Average word count per person
Leader profiles	Present (1), absent (0)
Election information	Summed word count
Event calendar	Summed word count
Frequently asked questions	Summed word count
Negative campaigning	Summed word count
Credit claiming	Summed word count
Targeted pages	Number of groups targeted
<b>Upward Information Flows</b>	
Donation	Download form (1), online inquiry form (2), on-line transaction (3), no reference (0)
Merchandise	Download form (1), online inquiry form (2), on-line transaction (3), no reference (0)
Cookies	Present (1), absent (0)
<b>Horizontal Information Flows</b>	
Partisan links	Number of groups supportive of organizations goals
Reference links	Number of general information sites
Internal links	Number of suborganizational groups

*Source: own processing based on Gibson, Ward (2000).*

Table 1 shows the first three categories of indicators in the information and communication flow group. According to the mentioned structure, information and communication flows in three different directions: top-down, bottom-up and horizontal. Top-down information and communication focuses primarily on providing the characteristics of a political party or candidate. Indicators of quantity related to the offered documents, manifestos, values, ideology, leader profile, candidates or party history. In that same vein, the indicators are also interested in frequently asked questions from website visitors, newsletters, media outputs, information on elections or a calendar of events (past or upcoming). When it comes to information flowing from the bottom up or from visitors and potential voters to the political party, indicators analyse the possibilities of providing donations (financial), purchasing/ordering presentation items and collecting information cookies from the activity of the visitor on the website. The horizontal level of the flow of information and communication is focused on the presence of links to organizations that directly support the political party in fulfilling its goals, other general information websites or links to internal groups of the political party.

**Table 2:** *Indicators for Information and Communication Flows Part II.*

<b>Interactive Information Flows - Asynchronous</b>	
Downloading logos/posters	Number of opportunities
Site search	Present (1), absent (0)
On-line games/gimmicks	Present (1), absent (0)
e-mail contact	Number of addresses offered
e-mail feedback	e-mail address (1), e-mail requesting comments (2), on-line form/poll (3), no reference (0)
Join the mailing list	Present (1), absent (0)
Join the on-line campaign	Present (1), absent (0)
Membership	Download form (1), on-line inquiry form (2), on-line transaction (3), no reference (0)
Absentee voting	Information (1), e-mail inquiry contact (2), download inquiry/registration form (3), no reference (0)
Bulletin board	Present (1), absent (0)
<b>Interactive Information Flows - Synchronous</b>	
Chat room	Present (1), absent (0)

On-line debate	Number of opportunities to debate candidates/ leaders
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Source: own processing based on Gibson, Ward (2000).

The second group of the indicators of the flow of information and communication focuses on asynchronous and synchronous interactive information, which is presented in Table 2. The synchronous form of interactive elements is represented by an active chat room window with a direct possibility of communication or an online debate. On the other hand, the asynchronous form of information flow is analysed by the possibilities of communicating and contacting after asking. The indicators monitor not only the possibilities for contact, leaving feedback or contacts for intentional communication, but also assess the search on the site, download offers, games, membership options or selection from abroad. Its also focused on absentee voting indicator. It means if political party offers information about voting before election day by mail or drop box.

**Table 3: Indicators for Site Delivery**

Graphics/Flashiness	Total number of images or pictures
Multimedia/Dynamism	Moving icons (1), audio (2), video (3), live streaming (4)
Freshness	Updated daily (6), 1 to 2 days (5), 3 to 7 days (4), every 2 weeks (3), monthly (2), 1 to 6 months (1), more than 6 months (0)
Accessibility (in principle)	No frames option (+1), text-only option (+1), foreign language translation (+1), blind/visually impaired software (+1)
Accessibility (in practice)	Site working (+1), inaccessible (0), size of home page in Kb
Navigability	Navigation tips (+1), number of search engines (+n), home page icons on each page (+1), major site are links/menu bar on each page (+1), site map (+1)
Responsiveness (speed)	Same day (5), 1 to 2 days (4), up to 1 week (3), up to 2 weeks (2), up to 1 month (1), more than 1 month (0)
Responsiveness (quality)	Number of words
Visibility	Number of links in yahoo party index (present - 1, absent - 0)

Source: own processing based on Gibson, Ward (2000).

The last group of indicators is focused on a website delivery. The criteria evaluate the graphic processing of the web, moving (dynamic) multimedia content, accessibility, processing of navigation and orientation on the web, the intensity of the response from the web and visibility on web browsers. Web graphics analyses the total number of static images on the main page and dynamic content in the form of moving images, audio, video or live streaming. Website availability and accessibility will focus on website variations (text only, no frames, language versions or versions for the blind), site functionality or inaccessibility. Content update is evaluated through the interval of updating new content. Website navigation looks for tips for better orientation, the number of search engines on the page or the site map. Based on the answers to researcher's questions from the available contacts, the model tries to find out the speed of getting the answer and the extent of the answer itself. The last indicator assesses the website's visibility in internet search processes.

### **3 OBJECTIVES, RESEARCH QUESTIONS AND METHODOLOGICAL PROCEDURE OF ANALYSIS PROCESSING**

The main objective of the study is to identify the level of effectiveness of communication on the websites of selected political parties in Slovakia. Based on the applied framework of the authors Gibson, Ward (2000), the setting of partial goals follows five groups of indicators with the addition of a comparative perspective of selected political parties: a) identification of similarities and differences in the flow of information flowing from the bottom up; b) identification of similarities and differences in the flow of information flowing from the top down; c) identifying the similarities and differences in the flow of information flowing horizontally; d) identifying the similarities and differences of the asynchronous flow of information; e) identifying the similarities and differences of the synchronous flow of information. For the main objective and partial objectives, we set the following research questions: 1) Main research question: What is the level of effectiveness of political communication on websites of selected political parties in Slovakia before 2020 general elections? 2) Partial research questions: a) What similarities and differences can be identified in the flow of information from the bottom up between research subjects? b) What similarities and differences can be identified in the flow of information from the top down between research subjects? c) What similarities and differences can be identified in the flow of information horizontally between research

subjects? d) What similarities and differences can be identified in the category of asynchronous flow of information between research subjects? e) What similarities and differences can be identified in the category of synchronous flow of information between research subjects?

A complex of sub-goals with categories and a total number of 48 indicators creates conditions for the successful fulfillment of the main goal. On the basis of dynamic processes in the online environment and the warning of the authors (Gibson, Ward, 2000) about the openness of the model, we decided upon the modification (addition) of some indicators and their measurement methods. The reason is to include new common elements currently present on websites. We add a total of 5 new indicators (with method of measurement) to the original conceptual framework. We added three indicators in the category of the horizontal flow of information: social networks/platforms (number of social networks/platforms used) – i.e. whether the political party offers the option to redirect to the official page on social networks; blogs (number of blogs maintained) – i.e. if the political party includes a blog section on their website; newspapers (present – 1, absent – 0 ) – i.e. whether the political party offers the party newspaper on its website. We also added one indicator for the Synchronous flow of information category: radio (present – 1, absent – 0) – i.e. whether the party offers party's radio on its website; and finally, we added one indicator for the Website Delivery category: visibility in the Google search processes (present – 1, absent – 0). We use the measurement of indicators for presence or absence, or a specific form, in their original form presented in framework. We apply the difference from the original conceptual framework in the use of divisors of 100 or 1000 to simplify calculations in the case of measuring total word counts, average word counts, and email contacts. The reason for using divisors is to reduce the size of the total values, as in some cases research shows values in the tens of thousands. Due to the scope of the article, we will present the full scope of investigated indicators and the way they are measured together with specific cases of political parties in the analytical section. All active political parties in Slovakia with an accessible website represent the basic set for the possibility of analysis processing. Regarding the high number of active political parties for the period under review - the last general election period February 2020 – 65 entities (MINV, 2020), we narrowed the scope of monitored subjects according to the intentional criterion: the status of the parliamentary political party before the elections to the National Council of the Slovak Republic in 2020 and after the announcement of results. This criterion is met by 9 political parties, as the political party #Siet' ended its official activity during the election period



and is no longer on the list of active political parties. The analysis is thus interested in the remaining 8 political parties: Smer-SD, SNS, Most-Híd, ĽSNS, SaS, OĽaNO, Sme Rodina and Za ľudí. The basic source of data for the purposes of analysis are the websites of the selected group of subjects and the available documents (programs, policies, manifestos, statutes) according to the monitored indicators. For each subject, we determine the values of the same analytical units/indicators. According to the monitoring of the method of their measurement, we write down the resulting values in quantitative form or assign point values. We present the results and evaluation of the obtained data in tables for all subjects in a common comparative perspective according to indicator categories. We describe the data and add specific characteristics found in the subjects to the indicators. The evaluation continues with two resulting summary tables. The first summary clarifies the overall obtained point score, which expresses the absolute value achieved - it points to the quality of the provided communication. The second summary provides an evaluation of the representation of the presence of indicators - it points to the quantitative form of the provision of communication. The purpose of the double form of evaluation is to ensure a control process that will point not only to the presence of indicators, but in some cases also to their scope - quality. The mentioned method of evaluation can identify a lower number of represented indicators, but in a larger range (higher quality processing), on the contrary, a situation may arise that the subject achieves 100% representation of indicators, but the value of the range will be lower than a subject that may not have all indicators represented.

#### **4 EFFECTIVENESS OF COMMUNICATION ON WEBSITES OF SELECTED POLITICAL PARTIES IN SLOVAKIA BEFORE THE 2020 GENERAL ELECTION**

The evaluation structure is divided into two main groups of indicators: the flow of information and communication, and the delivery of the website. Considering the scope, we created evaluation tables. In the tables below, we present the results of the group of information flow and communication indicators of the first three categories: information flowing from the bottom up, information flowing from the top down, information flowing horizontally (Table 3). In Table 4, we combine the presentation of the remaining two categories of the first group: interactive flow of information – asynchronous and synchronous, and indicators of the second group: delivery of the website.

**Table 4: Indicators for Information and Communication Flows I.**

Downward Information Flows	SMER-SD	SNS	Most-Hid	LSNS	SaS	OLaNO	Sme Rodina	Za ľudí
Organizational history/History (word count/100)	315	105	66	0	448	0	0	0
Documents (manifesto) (summed word count/1000;summed document count)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Policies (summed word count/1000)	4006	9606	49504	2080	11 single documents	57600	3602	42693
Values/Ideology (word count/100)	332	1678	540	110	1444	689	157	700
Structure (word count/100)	2011	4414	2125	503	1980	0	3137	3659
Who is who (average word count per person/100)	0	13	43	0	241	230	3	282
Newsletters (number available/100)	432	2475	2159	Not available	4825	1080	0	0
Media releases (number available/100)	261	606	100	Not available	597	0	310	0
Candidate profiles (average word count per person/100)	0	257	0	0	140	230	0	0
Leader profile (word count/100)	0	127	86	0	607	202	808	197
Event calendar (present 1, absent 0)	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	0
Election information (present 1, absent 0)	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	0
Frequently asked questions (summed word count)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Negative campaigning (summed word count)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Credit claiming (summed word count)	0	0	0	0	0	0	6	2
Targeted pages (number of groups targeted)	9	0	4	2	6	0	0	0
Upward information flows	SMER-SD	SNS	Most-Hid	LSNS	SaS	OLaNO	Sme Rodina	Za ľudí
Donation (download form 1, online inquiry form 2, online transaction 3, no reference 0)	3	3	3	0	3	0	3	3
Merchandise (download form 1, online inquiry form 2, online transaction 3, no reference 0)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Cookies (present 1, absent 0)	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Lateral/Horizontal information flows	SMER-SD	SNS	Most-Hid	LSNS	SaS	OLaNO	Sme Rodina	Za ľudí
Partisan links (number of groups supportive of organizations goals)	5	2	2	1	1	0	2	0
Reference links (number of general information sites)	4	0	1	0	3	0	0	0
Internal links (number of suborganizational groups/links)	0	0	1	1	2	0	0	0
Social networks/platforms (number of social networks/platforms)	1	3	4	2	3	3	3	2
Blog (summed blog count)	2	1	1	0	15	9	0	0
Newspaper (present 1, absent 0)	0	1	0	1	0	1	0	0

*Source: own processing based on data from political parties websites.*

Political parties provide the description of their history only very briefly or not at all. In the case of Sme Rodina and Za ľudí, this may be due to a relatively short period of activity in the party system, while the remaining subjects, despite their longer period of activity, pay minimal attention to this indicator. The party manifestos are completely absent and usually only consist of a brief introduction of the basic party principles of party. They are commonly used for example by European political parties (EPP, 2019; PES, 2019). The attention is paid to the detailed elaboration of programs, policies, values and ideology. Smer-SD offers information related to the party values and ideologies in the sections "About us" and in the party's Statutes. Regarding values and ideologies, all remaining subjects offer them similarly in presenting information. The program of Smer-SD includes a more extensive document dedicated to the 2016 National Council elections, on the other hand, a much briefer one for the elections in 2020. SNS offers a much higher number of programs (Cassovia thesis, Poprad memorandum, Memorandum for life and homeland, National Council election programs 2016 and 2020), on the other hand, the quality of the scope with regard to the number is not the most significant. Most-Híd offers the following in terms of programs: Vision 2016, Anti-corruption Package, Regional Development Package and the EU Program Document. There is no program available for the 2020 elections. The largest number of program documents (11) of all monitored subjects is found on the SaS party website. The interactive form of online browsing of documents prevented the identification of the number of words in all the documents. The remaining subjects (OĽaNO, ĽSNS, Sme Rodina and Za ľudí) each present only one program document, always linked to the 2020 National Council elections. In the case of ĽSNS, it is currently not possible to measure the National Council 2020 election program (present was only 2016 National Council elections program). Despite only having one program, OĽaNO achieves the highest number of words (excluding the SaS website); we found a similarly detailed document by Za ľudí. Sme Rodina party program is written in the form of short and brief goals. Information on the election appears alongside the election programs (monitored in the Policies/Programs indicator) for all subjects with the exception of Za ľudí. From the point of view of history, it is possible to delve deeper into the information about the elections to the VÚC from 2009 with SaS. For various types of elections, we identified the availability of information on elections to the VÚC (SNS – 2017; SaS – 2009, 2013, 2017), NRSR (SNS – 2016, 2020; Smer-SD – 2016, 2020; Most-Híd – 2016, 2020, ĽSNS – 2016; SaS – 2016, 2020; OĽaNO – 2020, Sme Rodina - 2020), EU (SNS – 2019; SaS – 2019,

Most-Híd - 2019), presidential (SNS – 2019; SaS - 2019) and municipal (SNS – 2018, SaS - 2018). Information about the leaders/chairmans of parties is primarily designed in the form of a brief presentation of each of them. Subsequent information about other representatives does not offer a similarly significant scope. The last indicator related to the introduction of members - candidates for elections, reaches lower values in the total sum. On the contrary, the Newsletters and Media releases indicator categories are quite numerous, except for the two cases of Sme Rodina and Za ľudí. The exception in this case due to the lack of website functionality is currently also represented by ĽSNS. The remaining indicators in the bottom-up information flow categories show a minimal presence of values. The shift to the category of indicators evaluating the flow of information from top to bottom reflects the collection of cookies about user activity on the web, which is present on all pages. On the other hand, offers for sale of promotional materials or party merchandise are not offered by any of the subjects. Each political party enables the possibility of financial support by publishing a transparent account, where potential interested parties can contribute to the parties' activities or to their election campaign. The core of the third category of indicators focuses on the presence of other websites that are either related to a supporting entity or a general information element. The presence of websites of groups/entities supporting a political party is roughly divided into two antagonistic groups. The first group is represented by parties that have websites of supporting organizations (Smer-SD, SNS, Most-Híd, ĽSNS, SaS and Sme Rodina), the second group includes parties without other supporting websites (OĽaNO, Za ľudí). We identified the highest number of supporting and cooperating partners/entities in the case of Smer-SD (Socialist Group in the EP, ČSSD, Party of European Socialists, Socialist International, KOZ, Pensioners' Union in Slovakia, Slovak Union of Anti-Fascist Fighters, Young Social Democrats, ASA). For the remaining pages, we register either 2 supporting organizations (SNS, Most-Híd, Sme Rodina) or 1 supporting organization (ĽSNS, SaS) on the website. The most popular form of communication is the use of social networks and platforms, which, according to the analysis of the indicator, are used by all monitored entities. The primarily used redirection to the social network is to Facebook (Smer-SD, SNS, Most-Híd, ĽSNS, SaS, OĽaNO, Sme Rodina, Za ľudí), followed by Instagram (Most-Híd, SaS, OĽaNO, Sme Rodina, Za ľudí), Youtube (SNS, Most-Híd, ĽSNS, Most-Híd, Sme Rodina) and Twitter (Most-Híd). In addition to profiles of political parties, personal social media profiles of individuals and politicians are also frequently present. The links to the personal

profiles on the social networks of politicians that are on the websites of the political parties replace the absence of more detailed descriptions of the representatives directly on the websites of the subjects. The traditional format of party newspapers still holds its place in the cases of SNS, ĽSNS and OĽaNO. We can identify blogs as the last indicator in the third category in the case of Smer-SD, SNS, Most-Híd, SaS and OĽaNO. Once again, there are links to the personal blogs of party representatives. SaS and OĽaNO have the largest number of bloggers, followed by Smer-SD, SNS and Most-Híd. Politicians use the web blogging platforms of the main Slovak newspapers: sme.sk, pravda.sk, hospodárskenoviny.sk and etrend.sk.

The most comprehensive range of logos available for download is on the Sme Rodina page. In addition to the standard quality, the subject also offers the basic logo for download in a vector format. In addition, it offers a redesign of the party's logo with the description "We Are a Family" that helps and the banner "A Just State". The font used completes the download package. SNS, SaS and Za ľudí offer visitors minimal options to download the party logo. The other monitored entities (Smer-SD, Most-Híd and ĽSNS) do not have this option. Interaction through online games is not used by any party; on the contrary, the possibility to search on the page represents the standard equipment of web tools. In this case, one exception of the Za ľudí party, which does not allow visitors to search on the page. Political parties offer an average of 73.5 e-mail contacts on their websites. E-mail contacts enable direct contact either with the representatives/specific persons or provide contact with organizational units/departments. The only site that allows you to download a complete list of e-mail addresses is Most-Híd, for other subjects you have to search for contacts in different tabs. For almost all parties, the possibility of membership in the party takes the form of filling out a form and sending it either via e-mail (Smer-SD, SNS, ĽSNS, SaS) or an online tool (Za ľudí, Sme Rodina). After sending the form, ĽSNS also adds the need for a personal interview with the district representative. The one exception is OĽaNO, which does not offer the possibility of becoming a direct member of the party, but a member of a regional team with pan-Slovak scope, which takes the form of support activities for the benefit of the party.

As for the synchronous interactive flow of information, indicator of possibility to ask a question in the chat room online window identifies an active function only on the Most-Híd website. In this case, it is not a direct discussion, but an addition to the e-mail form of asking questions. Direct online discussion on the website is absent in all cases. Currently, the direct

form of discussion is replaced primarily by interaction on social networks, where political representatives can also provide live streaming options on individual personal or party profiles or discuss with users directly in the comments of published posts. The last rated indicator of radio/podcasts is registered in active operation only in the case of ĽSNS. ĽSNS manages its own radio on the website [radionaseslovensko.net](http://radionaseslovensko.net), whose website is currently inactive. We identify the podcast supplement to the voice form of communication on the Za ľudí page with the option to download podcasts via links to the Spotify, Apple Podcasts and Google Podcasts platforms.

**Table 5: Indicators for Information and Communication Flows II.**

Interactive informations flows: Asynchronous	SMER-SD	SNS	Most-Hid	LSNS	SaS	OLaNO	Sme Rodina	Za ľudí
Download logos/posters (number of opportunities)	0	1	0	0	1	0	7	1
Site search (present 1, absent 0)	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	0
Online games/gimmicks (present 1, absent 0)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
E-mail contact (number of addresses offered/100)	95	109	60	48	120	23	112	21
E-mail feedback (e-mail address 1, e-mail requesting comments 2, online form/poll 3, no reference 0)	1	1	1	1	2	1	2	3
Join e-mail list (present 1, absent 0)	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0
Join online campaign (present 1, absent 0)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
Membership (download form 1, online inquiry form 2, online transaction 3, no reference 0)	1	1	1	1	1	0	2	2
Absentee voting (information 1, e-mail inquiry contact 2, download inquiry form 3, no reference 0)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Bulletin board (present 1, absent 0)	0	1	1	1	1	0	0	1
Interactive informations flows: Synchronous	SMER-SD	SNS	Most-Hid	LSNS	SaS	OLaNO	Sme Rodina	Za ľudí
Chat room (present 1, absent 0)	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0
Online debate (number of opportunities to debate candidates/leaders)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Radio/Podcast (present 1, absent 0)	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1
Indicators for Site Delivery	SMER-SD	SNS	Most-Hid	LSNS	SaS	OLaNO	Sme Rodina	Za ľudí
Graphics/flashiness (total number of images or pictures)	13	32	23	21	10	16	20	21
Multimedia/dynamism (moving icons 1, audio 2, video 3, streaming 4)	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	2
Freshness (update daily 6, 1 to 2 days 5, 3 to 7 days 4, every 2 weeks 3, monthly 2, 1 to 6 months 1, more than 6 months 0)	6	6	6	4	6	6	6	N/A
Accessibility (in principle) (no frames +1, text-only option +1, foreign language +1, blind/visibility +1, impaired software +1)	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	0
Accessibility (in principle) (site working 1, inaccessible 0, size of home page in Kb)	1 (103kb)	1 (101,8kb)	1 (80kb)	1 (72kb)	1 (46kb)	1 (114kb)	1	1
Navigability (in practice) (navigation tips +1, number of search engines +1, home page icon on each page +1, major site area, menu on each page +1, site map +1)	3	3	6	5	3	3	5	3
Responsiveness (speed)	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Responsiveness (quality)	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Visibility (google) (present 1, absent 0)	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Visibility (Yahoo index) (present 1, absent 0)	1	1	1	0	0	0	0	0

Source: own processing based on data from political parties websites.

We present the summarization of quantitative findings of the occurrence of indicators in two types of evaluation. The first evaluation in Table 6 (Results A) offers the processing and calculation of values according to the defined criteria of the Gibson, Ward (2000) model with modifications that we present in the description of the model. The second evaluation in Table 7 (Results B) maintains the defined indicators of Gibson, Ward (2000) as in the case of Table 5. The difference in the calculation consists in proving the presence of the share of indicators from their total analyzed number.

According to the findings in Table 6, we note the highest score achieved by Most-Híd, followed by OĽaNO and SNS with the highest ratings. At the opposite end, below a score value of 100, we record SMER-SD and ĽSNS. The green color expressing the highest achieved score in the indicator category shows up to three times the supremacy of SaS despite the fact that the subject is in the overall view approximately average. On the contrary, paradoxically, OĽaNO, which received the second highest overall score, also achieved, together with ĽSNS, the highest number of smallest values in the indicator categories. A high rating in the first category of indicators helps OĽaNO to achieve a positive overall score.

**Table 6: Results A**

Results A	SMER-SD	SNS	Most-Híd	ĽSNS	SaS	OĽaNO	Sme Rodina	Za ľudí
Indicators for Information and Communication Flows								
Downward Information Flows (16 indicators)	49,51	116,38	155,32	12,21	73,57	139,72	54,75	92,89
Upward information flows (3 indicators)	4	4	4	1	4	1	4	4
Lateral/Horizontal information flows (6 indicators)	12	7	9	5	23	13	5	2
Interactive informations flows: Asynchronous (10 indicators)	3,95	6,09	4,6	5,48	7,2	2,23	13,2	8,2
Interactive informations flows: Synchronous (3 indicators)	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	1



Indicators for Site Delivery (10 indicators)	28	47	41	36	24	30	36	28
Sum (48 indicators)	97,46	180,47	214,92	60,69	131,77	185,95	112,95	136,09
Intensity by Color in Indicator Category								
Most	Last							

Source: own processing based on data from political parties websites.

While OLaNO achieves the second highest score in the evaluation above, on the contrary, in terms of the number of represented indicators (Table 7), it ranks last with a value of 21 (46% of all measured indicators). The mentioned phenomenon is caused by the fact that although the subject can successfully fill the web with a set of indicators to a lesser extent, on the other hand, the indicators are elaborated in a better quality from the point of view of scope. Most-Híd and SNS get the highest ratings again, this time joined by SaS. They move higher in terms of contained indicators above 67% of measured indicators. Compared to the first three, Smer-SD, ĽSNS, Sme Rodina, Za ľudí and OLaNO receive lower ratings. All subjects are in the middle band of the obtained score. We do not register any of the websites of political parties in the low band.

**Table 7: Results B**

Results B	Smer-SD	SNS	Most-Híd	ĽSNS	SaS	OLaNO	Sme Rodina	Za ľudí
Indicators for Information and Communication Flows								
Downward Information Flows (16 indicators)	8	12	11	8	13	8	8	7
Upward information flows (3 indicators)	2	2	2	1	2	1	2	2
Lateral/Horizontal information flows (6 indicators)	4	4	5	4	5	3	2	1
Interactive informations flows: Asynchronous (10 indicators)	4	6	5	6	6	3	5	6

Interactive informations flows: Synchronous (3 indicators)	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	1
Indicators for Site Delivery (8 indicators)	7	7	8	7	6	6	6	5
Sum (46 indicators)	25 (0,54)	31 (0,67)	33 (0,78)	27 (0,59)	32 (0,71)	21 (0,46)	23 (0,5)	22 (0,48)
Intensity by Color in Indicator Category								
Most			Last					
Sum Indicators Value Intensity								
0 - 0,33: Low								
0,34 - 0,66: Middle								
0,67 - 1: High								

*Source: own processing based on data from political parties websites.*

## CONCLUSIONS

The elaborated study adds to the set of analytical studies devoted to the analysis of a selected set of websites of political parties. The analysis is based on the application of a model framework for research on the effectiveness of communication on the websites of political parties or representatives, which is used for the basic identification of the range of indicators. For analysis, the study offers an overview of relevant literature sources using the structured literature overview technique. The time period follows on from research that is primarily interested in tracking a narrower interval. Data collection on the websites of political parties took place in the shortest possible period due to possible unexpected dynamic changes that may occur in the environment. This was demonstrated in the recent period with one entity we monitored - Kotlebovci ĽSNS, whose analyzed website is no longer active at the moment. The data obtained from selected websites come from the period before the elections to the NRSR in 2020. In political science, various methods are used to measure the party system's dynamics to determine the intensity of changes and the trends arising from them (Smolecová, Šarovec, 2021). The research of the main elections to the legislature also has the highest degree of significance from the point of view of findings. On the other hand, the political parties themselves probably offer the widest range and variety of information in this type of election. From the point of view of the consistency of the information offered, it would be appropriate to carry out a control measurement in the inter-election period, similar to a set of studies that are not specifically

oriented to the time before the elections. The subjects of interest of the study represent political parties as organizations uniting people with the same ideological base and their websites. We conducted research exclusively of political parties' websites. In this case, social networks represent one of the included indicators of presence on websites, which are used primarily as a tool for the presentation of specific representatives. The opportunity to be redirected to social network pages are presents on all of monitored subject cases. Research on the activity of political parties on social networks is also suitable to be carried out separately, even on the basis of the available measurement frameworks specifically oriented towards social networks. Depending on the location, we follow up on studies that are interested in the European region more broadly. With strictly narrow specifications, we supplement the current state of research carried out in the Slovak Republic. According to the number of investigated subjects, and based on the set conditions, we focus on the category of up to ten investigated websites. On the one hand, the number has a narrow range, on the other hand, the applied framework model analyzes almost 50 indicators. The choice of research strategy is based on the use of the Gibson, Ward (2000) model with an exclusively quantitative nature. We can confirm that the analysis did not evaluate the qualitative aspects for example from the point of view of included types of jargons as defined by Russmann (2020). It only focused on the quantitative techniques with number of words in total, number of possible opportunities, or presence or absence of indicators. According to the authors Gibson, Ward (2000), the aspect of quality manifests itself in the form of an evaluation of the frequency of occurrence of words for selected indicators. In the cases analysed, the authors mean the quality of the range of words, not an application of qualitative research strategies with the intention of evaluating the indicators in depth. In our case, the confrontation of the findings of the study is of the highest importance compared to the study by Žúborová, Žúbor (2013), which was based on the same model when evaluating the effectiveness of communication on the web. The first element of difference is already evident in the set of evaluated political parties, which also points to significant changes in the party system in Slovakia. The number of entities has changed, entities have gone through the process of dissolution (SDKÚ-SD), new ones have been created (ĽSNS, Sme Rodina, Za ľudí, OĽaNO), parliamentary ones became non-parliamentary (Most-Híd, SNS, KDH), coalitions have become oppositional or vice versa (Smer -SD, SaS). In relation to the concluding remarks of the authors Žúborová, Žúbor (2013), several similarities or differences are explored. The length of time a

political party has been active in the party system has tendencies to impact the effectiveness of communication on the web – in other words, younger political parties are still only approaching older political parties in terms of complexity and scope. Despite the attractive and graphically engaging websites, younger sites lag behind in the evaluation of indicators. On the other hand, with regard to the described changes in the party system, we can state that the effectiveness of communication on the web is not a key factor or is not the only one needed for successful operation in the competition of political parties. SNS maintains stable above-average values compared to other subjects, despite the fact that in the 2012-2016 election period it acquired non-parliamentary status and the same situation occurred after the 2020 elections. In discussion with Vaccari's (2015) results, the only political party on the left, Smer-SD, does not focus deeply on the ideology indicator. That result is in opposition to possible maximization of Smer-SD complex information pack on the website. The level of interactive online communication did not go through the process of increasing either in the current period. The absence of interactive website tools also confirmed Garcia-Rosales, Abuín-Vences (2019) findings. Users then can't communicate with the political party of other users directly on the website. We find an exception when it comes to the possibility of financial support for political parties, which are available at least in the form of transparent accounts. The party membership indicator has improved, with various other types of membership such as the statuses of supporter, sympathizer or members of regional teams without direct party membership added. Innovative elements compared to other parties occur in the case of Most-Híd, which enables communication through a chat window, podcast broadcasts with the possibility of downloading (Za ľudí) or party radio (ĽSNS). Streaming activities are an increasingly popular form of communication between political parties and their representatives, but they are part of social network platforms and links to social networks only appear on websites. According to Mochla, Tsourvakas (2020) the interesting or interactive features could positively influence voters' or users' activity on political parties' websites. The results show that Slovak parties moved their interactive features primarily to the social networks sites. From a comprehensive point of view, we can note the progress of the parties in the quality of the provided content in terms of scope. The enhancement of communication on the websites lies in supplementing the use of social networks. Shortcomings in the monitored subjects are manifested mainly in the information flowing in the bottom-up direction. Political parties continue operating on the understanding that

their websites are a one-way platform from the party to the voter or to the citizen seeking information. If he is interested in information that is not found on the website and makes inquiries, the answer is usually arrived at by a more demanding and time-consuming route.

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