

Policy advisory systems in Slovakia during Covid-19 crisis: Case study of the Central Crisis Committee

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Róbert Martin Hudec

Institute of Public Policy

Comenius University in Bratislava

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Abstract

Does the link between policy advice and government performance exist in Covid-19 pandemics? By utilizing the case study of the Central Crisis Committee (further „CCC) in Slovakia we attempt to find out whether the variations of policy advice bodies are a factor, which determines different performance outcomes. Two specific circumstances should be taken into account when exploring Slovak case mentioned above: very uneven government performance during Covid-19 crisis comparing first and second wave and secondly parliamentary elections which led to change of government during the first wave of crisis. 71 members and alternates of the CCC, who come from 23 government organizations and the Red Cross have been analyzed. Their profiles including age, gender, education, career paths, current position and partisanship have been created. The profiles for three specific configurations of the CCC have been compared (profile of the CCC in the first wave before and after the government exchange, profile in the second wave).

Introduction

During pandemics, many authors have dealt with the issue of factors which may influence the government performance. Factors such as decentralization and agentification (Petridou, 2020, Capano, 2020, Toshkov et al., 2020), organizational cultures (Pattyn et al., 2020), government effectiveness (Capano et al., 2020; Toshkov et al., 2020) or the position of the Ministry of Healthcare and the career path of its minister (Toshkov et al., 2020). Only limited attention was

paid to the impact of policy advice on government performance during pandemics. We decided to select an actor of policy advisory system (further “PAS) in Slovakia for further analysis.

Following paper focuses on a very unique case study of the Central Crisis Committee in the Slovak Republic. In the Slovak Republic, there is a great imbalance about the antipandemic government performance in the first and second wave, yet, that provides an opportunity to study the changes in the policy advice. Additionally, Slovakia went through government exchange during the first wave. The CCC is a committee where the board consists of members and alternates from 23 governmental organizations including the Government office, ministries, important healthcare and security agencies and 1 nongovernmental organization, the Slovak red cross.

This paper attempts to answer the following research questions:

RQ: How did the profiles of the Central Crisis change in the first and second wave of Covid-19 pandemics in Slovakia?

Sub-RQ1: What was the profile of the Central Crisis Committee during the first wave of Covid-19 in Slovakia?

Sub-RQ2: What was the profile of the Central Crisis Committee during the second wave of Covid-19 in Slovakia?

We managed to retrieve data of 24 organizations and 71 members and alternates in the CCC, and by bibliographical analysis, we will construct the profiles of the CCC. The profiles will consist of their age, gender, education, current position, previous occupation, and partisanship.

The paper will be structured as follows: first, a brief overview of Policy advisory system literature is overviewed, followed by a quick summary of Covid-19 literature in public policy domain. The PAS in the Slovak republic is explained, and Policy advice and performance in Covid-19 is being discussed. The case study is explained, followed by a methodological chapter. The profiles are then created, discussed, and concluded in the remarks.

Policy Advisory Systems

In my paper, I will try to find a relationship between the state of the policy advisory system (further only “PAS”) in the country and the government performance during various waves of Covid-19 pandemics. The following chapter serves to provide a brief overview on the literature

on PAS and its main research concerns. Contemporary policy making relies on policy advice from a variety of actors and sources, ranging from individual actors to multiple interlocking sets of policy advice in specific jurisdictions (Hustedt and Veit, 2017). The PAS includes policy advice actors ranging from professional public service and ministerial advisors to NGO`s, think-tanks, and even to less formal forms of advice as are colleagues, friends and relatives (Craft and Howlett, 2012). Within the PAS literature, a specific branch focuses on ministerial advisors (Connaughton 2010; Eichbaum and Shaw, 2008; Maley, 2000; Askim et al., 2017), or another branch focuses on governmental bodies, such as ministerial departments, research agencies and governmental advisory bodies (Veit et al., 2016, Sedlačko and Staroňová, 2018; Fobé et al., 2013) or even media (Murray, 2005).

In the studying of PAS, various typologies are proposed in order to better understand what is the concern of scholars in this area. The early typologies, based on two criteria, location and control and this cluster of literature, is called the locational approach (Halligan, 1995; Craft and Howlett, 2012). This approach is utilized to understand who the policy actors within PAS are, while various variables are utilized to explain different operations and influences of PAS actors. Influence can be explained either by the external/internal character of the actor toward the government (Craft and Howlett, 2012) or as the proximity to the decision maker(s) (Howlett, 2011).

Later typologies were built on content-based approach, which examines the roles played by different policy advice actors (Craft and Howlett, 2012). A significant part of the content-based approach is focused on the internal advisors within the ministries, whether those are personal ministerial advisors (Connaughton 2010, Eichbaum and Shaw 2008, Askim et al., 2017), or advisory bodies such are analyst and expert units. (Veit et al., 2016, Sedlačko and Staroňová, 2018).

The content-based approach is a reaction to the broadened understanding of PAS. PAS has started to be more understood as wider and with a greater variety of actors and processes, a need for more detailed reflection of provided and utilized policy advice emerged (Craft and Halligan, 2015). Previously, the locational advice understood the policy content as tied to the character of policy advice actor and operated on a dichotomy of “political vs administrative” or “technical vs partisan” advice. (Craft and Howlett, 2012). This alignment of content to location criteria has come from the sharp political-administrative distinction from Westminster-style systems (Craft and Halligan, 2015). Craft and Howlett (2012) raised a concern for content-based

approach due to the link among content, influence, and location in PAS – in countries with internalized PAS, the closer the policy advice is to decision makers, the more evidence-based it is. In systems with externalized PAS, this proximity to decision-makers might have a contrary manifestation (Craft and Howlett, 2012). Another perspective on how to look at the content of policy advice is by its duration, where the typology distinguishes long-term ‘cold’ and short-term “hot” policy advice (Craft and Howlett, 2012).

The third approach deals with the dynamic of the PAS – the policy-advice actors, their relationships, and the environment in PAS changing over time. This cluster is not aiming to create typologies, yet it tries by founding patterns and similarities to describe dynamics within PAS and connect them with different kinds of PAS (Craft and Halligan, 2015). Two main dynamics have emerged most prominently - externalization and politicization (Craft and Howlett, 2013, Craft and Halligan 2015).

Two subclusters are identifiable in the study of politicization of PAS. First, the politicization of internal PAS (Craft and Howlett, 2013) is connected to professional politicization and the change of meritocratic criteria into political in public administration (Peters and Pierre, 2004). The second cluster focuses on politicization and its impact on the shift of PAS actors (Craft and Howlett 2013, Eichbaum and Shaw 2008).

The second dynamic, externalization is a shift from public service as a privileged source of policy advice to more diffuse and diversified advisory systems, such are think-tanks, consulting agencies etc. (Craft and Halligan, 2015). The initial literature on PAS attributed an exceptional position to internal sources of policy advice, claiming their close proximity to decision makers led to their greater influence on decision makers (Halligan 1995). This has been challenged by factors such as increased participatory efforts of third sides and the use of external consultants and commissions (Craft and Howlett, 2013). Policy analysts are no longer government departments employees exclusively, but also by external policy-advice actors within PAS (Craft and Howlett, 2013).

Externalization and politicization are two separate dynamics, but in some cases might overlap, as externalization of PAS might be an outcome of its politicization – a provider of “favorable” analysis might be chosen to support governmental policy choices (Veselý et al., 2015).

The dynamics approach is limited solely to the study of politicization and externalization. Pluralization and fragmentation (Van den Berg, 2017), globalization (Pal and Spence, 2018),

and the development of academic research in PAS (Pattyn et al., 2019) are also subjects to be examined by social scientists. As the dynamics approach towards PAS is the most recent one, some other trends might emerge in its further study rather than politicization and externalization.

Covid-19 in Public Policy

Researchers and academics are challenged by Covid-19 pandemic to discover the determinants of (un)successful response of various governments across the world by three approaches: either by evaluation of the effectiveness of antipandemic policy measures (Chubarová et al., 2020) or evaluations and analysis of national approaches in fighting the pandemic (Kavaliunas et al., 2020) or comparison of different strategies and their effectiveness (Aleta and Moreno, 2020).

Another stream of literature provides several explanation of different policy choices and their timing. Scholars view the utilized antipandemic policy as the outcome variable, which they seek to explain through a variety of dependent variables. Scholars focus on decentralization and agentification (Petridou, 2020), historical legacies and organizational cultures (Pattyn et al., 2020) rooted policy style and regionalism (Capano, 2020), relevant past experience and preparedness (Capano et al., 2020) as determinants of different antipandemic policy choices. Composition (Singh, 2020; Scally et al., 2020;), politicization (Capano, 2020; Freedman, 2020; Scally et al., 2020), and role conflation (Pearce, 2020) of advisory and expert bodies were also addressed as one determinant of different policy choices. Toshkov et al. (2020) see low government effectiveness, low regionalism and federalism level, background of the Minister of Healthcare with position of his resort and in limited cases also government party political preference as determinants of well implemented policy measures.

Finally, some academics see the Covid-19 pandemic as a critical juncture (Wolff and Ladi, 2020; Hajnal et al., 2020). Critical junctures are rare events in the development of an institution that lead to broadening of plausible choices for powerful political actors (Capoccia and Kelemen, 2007). Wolff and Ladi (2020) see Covid-19 as a possible critical juncture for the greater politicization of the European Union`s greater politicization. Hajnal et al. (2020) examine Covid-19 as critical juncture in order to better understand institution formation and democratic backsliding tendencies in Poland and Hungary. Schmidt (2020) theorize the Covid-19 crisis as a critical juncture within the EU and how this affected European integration.

PAS in the Slovak Republic

Only a limited part of the internal PAS in Slovakia has been addressed by scholars so far. Ministerial advisors were examined by Krajňák et al., (2020) exploring their profiles and career paths between the years 2010-2020. Three cohorts of advisors were identified:

1. visible – defined by the Civil Service Law (further as CSL),
2. invisible - de facto are in role of advisors, however, do not formally fall under the CSL
3. The so-called “Prime Minister’s Council of Advisors” as part-time employees of the Government Office tend to keep their previous jobs simultaneously.

The typical profile and career path of these Slovak ministerial advisors are described as high-educated males with education in law, economics, and journalism (Krajňák et al., 2020).

Another part of the internal Slovak PAS that is covered by scholars is ministerial departments. The case of Slovak ministerial departments, the analytical centers prove that even in a highly politicized CEE public administration culture, a number of new ministerial advisory bodies can emerge resting on principles of transparency, professional merit, voluntarism, and institutional autonomy (Sedlačko and Staroňová, 2018). These analytical centers are predominantly employing western-educated young males with economic, mathematical or IT backgrounds (Sedlačko and Staroňová, 2018).

Policy Advice and Performance in Covid-19 Response

Various institutional and structural factors (Capano, 2020, Capano et al., 2020, Pattyn et al., 2020, Toshkov et al., 2020 Scally et Al., 2020) have been discussed as determinants of (un)successful policy responses by the governments. The literature agrees, that it the timeliness of anti-pandemic measures is the key for successful fighting of the disease. This timeliness is affected by various factors, as are the regionalism and federalism, politicization, or background of the minister. The shortcoming of seeing anti-pandemic measures through the lense of institutional and structural factors is that it does not provide us answers why the same government performed differently in separate Covid-19 waves in year 2020.

Composition (Singh, 2020; Scally et al.,2020;), politicization (Capano, 2020; Freedman, 2020; Scally et al., 2020), and role conflation (Pearce, 2020) of advisory and expert bodies was addressed as one of the determinants of various policy choices, but was in the margin of interest of the scholars. I will have a look at the Slovak PAS in order to explain different government performance in first and second wave of Covid-19 Pandemic in Slovakia. The Ministerial advisors (Krajňák et al. 2020) and Analytical centers (Sedlačko and Staroňová, 2018) have been

covered in pre-pandemic times by scholars. But the internal Slovak PAS is not limited to these actors. A part of internal PAS (Howlett 2011) is commissions, committees and task forces. Advisory committees as described by Peters (2015) serve departments or governments and are made up of various organizations and other ministerial departments.

Craft and Howlett (2013) compare PAS to a market of policy-advice, which has its demand, supply and equilibrium. The members of the PAS are arrayed into a set of actors where the first set is labeled as “proximate decision-makers” and those are the demand part, the consumers of policy analysis and advice. The second set is the “knowledge producers”, which can be located in academia, statistical agencies, research institutes, that provide basic scientific, economic and social scientific data, they are the supply part. The third set is known as ‘policy brokers’ that serves as a mediator between the first two (Craft and Howlett, 2013). I am going to focus only on the supply part of Slovak PAS.

Case Study: Central Crisis Committee of the Slovak Republic

Various factors such as decentralization and agentification (Petridou, 2020, Capano, 2020, Toshkov et al., 2020), organizational cultures (Pattyn et al., 2020), government effectiveness (Capano et al., 2020; Toshkov et al., 2020) or the position of the Ministry of Healthcare and the career path of its minister (Toshkov et al., 2020) have been discussed as possible determinants of government performance in the Covid-19 response. Policy advice has been addressed by scholars only marginally (e.g. Capano 2020, Singh 2020, Scally 2020, Pierce 2020), which leads to lack of systematic attempts to evaluate the possible impact of the quality of policy advice and the composition of advisory bodies on government response.

Proposed paper aims to fulfill this gap by examining selected part of Slovak internal PAS during the Covid-19 pandemics. The Slovak pandemic situation was quite specific through the lens of government performance. During the first wave of Covid-19 pandemics, which we understand as the time period of 16 March 2020, until 14th June 2020 the number of positive cases, hospitalizations and deaths was very low. The second wave, which lasted from 1st October 2020 until 15 May 2021 had relatively great numbers of positive cases, hospitalizations and deaths (Commentary on Hospitalizations, 2021).¹ During both, the first and second wave, we

¹ This is the working version of the paper. There is no government document with full and exact data available, therefore I portray only vague picture of the waves in the working paper. After the analyst unit of the Ministry of Healthcare will publish their commentary on hospitalizations (announced to happen in following weeks), this paragraph will be updated.

understand the wave of pandemic as the time period from declaring until revocation of crisis situation by the government. The different government performance in various Covid-19 pandemic waves gives an opportunity to examine different factors that might have played a role.

The very different government performance is not the only specific of the Slovak Covid-19 pandemic case. National elections occurred just before the beginning of the first wave of pandemic, on 29 February 2021, with a full-scale governmental change on 21 March 2021. The government led by the socially democratic party SMER and the prime minister Peter Pellegrini ended and the government of Igor Matovič and his 'anti-corruption movement', together with coalition partners, started. None of the new governmental parties was in the previous government. As usually the government change comes with high turnover rate in Slovak public administration (e.g. Staroňová 2015), a possible change might have happened within the PAS too.

For the case study, a suitable actor of Slovak internal PAS had to be selected. Various actors of Slovak PAS have been identified for the possible analysis, as ministerial analytical centers have been working on the Covid-19 related agenda whether the analysts from the Ministry of Finance dealt with the economic impacts of the crisis, or the Institute of the Health Policies of Ministry of Healthcare was constantly working on the model of Covid-19 scenarios. Another possible source of policy advice in the Covid-19 crisis were personal ministerial and prime ministerial advisors, which are tied to their ministers by trust (Krajňák et al., 2020). However, the position of both analytical centers (Sedlačko and Staroňová, 2018) and personal ministerial advisors (Krajňák et al., 2020) have already been examined and since their work is utilized by their departments, finding a link between them and government performance would be a very indirect and unclear path.

Many advisory and coordination committees are established by the Slovak Government, with their statutes publicly available on the website of the Government office. After analyzing their statutes, two of them were suitable to be chosen for the case study, the Pandemic Committee (further as PC) and the Central Crisis Committee (further as CCC) as only work of these two committees is directly related to the pandemic agenda. The agenda of the Security Committee is also related to the pandemic situation, but the members of this committee are only the ministers of the government. The PC is established as advisory committee, while the CCC is established as coordinating committee, yet this difference will be treated only as a part of Slovak

legal jargon, as both of them have both coordinating committee functions (as understood by Peters, 2015) and are part of internal PAS, which provides substantive short-term policy advice as defined by Craft and Howlett (2012).

There are similarities in the statutes of the aforementioned committees. Both do share advisory functions, both are composed of mixed members from rank of high-ranking politicians and experts, and both have the option to invite other experts for the committee meetings. There are three main differences amongst them:

- 1) The PC includes ministers and chairmen of the self-governing regions as members, while the CCC only includes the ministries (and does not specify that minister has to be appointed).
- 2) The PC experts are mainly of a healthcare background
- 3) The PC has to reflect on the recommendation of the WHO and the European Commission. (Statute of the PC, Statute of the CCC)

For the Case study, we decided to choose the CCC for following reasons. On the policy advice market, as described by Craft and Howlett (2013), there is a ‘supply’ side of policy advice – places where policy advice is created, the ‘demand’ side – places, where policy advice is consumed and the ‘brokers’ who get supply to demand. The first reason why we decided to choose the CCC for the case study is that it is both, a consumer of policy advice and a producer of it, as it gives recommendations and anti-pandemic measures proposals to the Government. The second reason why we decided to choose the CCC is it’s close proximity to the government, as all the ministries have a member in the CCC. It is not defined who shall be the member, in the contrary to the PC, where the presence of the minister directly is defined.

The CCC is established by the Statute of the Central Crisis Committee from year 2019. The position and the powers of the CCC, as defined by the statute are

- 1) The Central Crisis Committee is a coordinating body of the Government of the Slovak Republic government for resolving a crisis situation outside the time of war, and a state of war
- 2) Central Crisis Committee in particular
 - a. analyzes and evaluates the risks of a crisis situation,
 - b. prepares proposals for measures to resolve the crisis situation and the basis for decision making in the government,

- c. coordinates the activities of state administration bodies, local self-government bodies and other components intended for resolving a crisis situation,
- d. cooperates with the Security Committee of the Slovak Republic in the preparation of measures,
- e. proposes to the government the use of a special-purpose reserve of funds to resolve the crisis situation and eliminate its consequences,
- f. proposes to the government the use of state material reserves and the release of emergency stocks of oil and oil products to resolve the crisis situation and eliminate its consequences;
- g. proposes to the government to request assistance from abroad, including humanitarian aid,
- h. controls the fulfillment of tasks and measures imposed by the government,
- i. evaluate crisis management procedures, generalize lessons learned, and use them in its activities. (Statute of the CCC)

The CCC has various members from Slovak ministries and central government agencies. Statute defines only three members by person as so: chairman (Minister of Interior) and vice-chairmen of the CCC (Minister of Foreign and European Affairs, Minister of Defense). Other ministries² as well as Government Office of the Slovak republic do not have specifically stated, who should be the member representing their organization. Though it is defined, that they shall be chosen by the competent superior. Relevant central offices³ also have a member seat in the CCC. The Department of Crisis Management of the Ministry of Interior also serves also as the secretariat of the CCC and thus is responsible for the logistics and records of the CCC meetings. The last member of the CCC is the Slovak Red Cross (further known as SRC) despite the fact that SRC is not a public organization. There is no knowledge on who these members are, how exactly are they appointed, how long they stay in function and if the membership in this body is prone to government changes.

Methodology

² Ministry of Healthcare, Ministry of Agriculture, Ministry of Economy, ministry of transport, ministry of interior, ministry of environment, ministry of justice, ministry of labor, ministry of culture, ministry of education and ministry of investments and regional development)

³ Office for nuclear control, Administration of state material reserves, National security office, Slovak information service, National bank of Slovakia, General staff of the armed forces, Presidium of Police corps, Presidium of firefighter and rescue corps, Public health office.

The purpose of this paper is to explore the profile of the Central Crisis Committee during the first and second wave of Covid-19 pandemics in Slovakia. The research questions are as follows:

RQ: How did the profiles of the Central Crisis change in first and second wave of Covid-19 pandemics in Slovakia?

Sub-RQ1: What was the profile of the Central Crisis Committee during the first wave of Covid-19 in Slovakia?

Sub-RQ2: What was the profile of the Central Crisis Committee during the second wave of Covid-19 in Slovakia?

The profiles will consist of age, gender, education, career paths, and turnover rate. Within the internal PAS of pre-Covid19 Slovakia, the age, gender and education and career paths of the Analytical Centers (Sedlačko and Staroňová, 2018) and ministerial advisors (Krajňák et al., 2020) were explored. For comparison purposes, we will build on this not wide, but related studying of Slovak PAS, therefore examining all these 4 categories in the CCC. We compose a single case qualitative study based on biographical data that are collected by the FOIA requests, and missing data are being added from secondary sources as are governmental and other websites and social networks, mostly Linked-in.

The categories of age and gender do not need further operationalization. They will be used for the comparison of the CCC with the Slovak civil service in general, which is mostly (64%) composed of women (Sedlačko and Staroňová, 2018). For further comparison purpose, when exploring the education of the CCC, I will utilize categories defined by Krajňák et al. (2020) being *economics, humanities and art, communication/journalism, management, political science international relations and public administration, law, natural sciences, technical sciences*. We added the categories of *healthcare* (that is, composed of medical, pharmacy and other health care studies graduates), as we want to have information about the proportion of healthcare specialists in the body, *security*, as many of the organizations in the CCC are of national security character *and no university education*. Further, we are going to distinguish between those that have graduated at home and abroad. If that member of the CCC had both education at home and abroad, he is put into the abroad category. Gaining education in Czech university pre-1993 was considered to be a part of the at home category.

Study of career paths can provide answers on the composition of advisory bodies and can be used to distinguish members with academic and administrative career (Veit et al. 2016) or tracking of political compatibility (Veit and Scholz, 2015). In Slovak context, Krajňák et al. (2020) focus on the previous employment of the advisors, current employment as advisors and subsequent employment. Previous employment with educational background can also be utilized on providing an answer on the role of advisers and the type of advice provided (Askim et al, 2017) or for party compatibility (Veit and Scholz, 2015). I build on the methodology of Krajňák et al. (2020) who distinguished 15 categories of employment and those were *public sector at the central level, public sector at a regional level, public sector at local government, other in the public sector, private sector, NGOs, academic sector, politics – elected politician, ‘politics - work in a party, politics – advisor, media, think tank, unions, no previous employment or other*. Ministers we decided to put together in one category with *politics, elected politician and ministers*, while state secretaries fall under *public sector at the central level*.

Further, as the CCC membership is not an employment, but rather a duty person fulfills while being currently employed, we will add to focus also their current employment. As they are all working in organizations which are members of the CCC, using the same typology as for previous employment would not be meaningful. Therefore, in their current employment we will distinguish between positions being *minister, head of the office, state secretary, high management, middle management, ministerial advisor, and regular employee*.

The length of tenure can be utilized as a proxy for personal loyalty (Pelgrims, 2004). In the case of Slovak ministerial advisors, Krajňák et al. (2020) found out that their tenure is lower than the tenure of minister. To understand the character of the CCC, exploring the loyalty and change of its membership by the government change would be beneficial. As the CCC is functioning only during crisis times and tenure (and ties to minister) would be hard to track, we decided to put tenure out of the profile. Staroňová and Rybář (2020) show, that bureaucratic turnover in the politicized CEE context of Slovakia is high by analyzing the turnover rate in upper and middle management. We decided to add turnover into the profile, as it better fits the purpose as turnover rate can show us how many members have been changed during the government change and what were the differences between the first and second wave. As the CCC varies also in number of members and alternates, operationalizing it as a simple percentual change in personal occupation is not sufficient. I understand the turnover rate as how many of the newly formed composition of the CCC have already had a seat in the previous composition. For a more complex understanding of loyalty, we will also aim at their partisanship, where we build

on the operationalization of Rybář and Spáč (2020) where they understand as partisanship being a politician (including former ministers, members of parliament or local politicians) and we expand this also for being a on a party candidate list either in Elections to National Council in 2016 or 2020, Municipal elections in 2018 or self-governing regional elections in 2017.

The limit of this research is that only partial data about the CCC were gathered in the second wave, as data for 2021 could not be retrieved yet. Further, there have been many unclarities and contradictions in the names of the CCC members and alternates and no minutes or name lists from the meetings were provided, therefore it might be possible that not all CCC members were analyzed.

Data source and research methods

Profiles will be examined by biographical research. To all the member institutions of the CCC, a FOIA request has been sent (in total 24 requests), with the exception of the Slovak Red Cross, which is not a public institution. In the FOIA request, the name of the delegate and his alternate, the process of choosing delegates and alternates, name of responsible for selection process, attendance on the CCC meetings, CV and e-mail address of the delegates and alternates were requested. To the Department of Crisis Management of the Ministry of Interior, as they serve as a secretariat of the CCC, a different FOIA request was sent, requesting the list of all the CCC meetings, name of all the delegates and alternates, minutes from the CCC meetings, names of possible invited experts and information about the possible attendance of the the members of Pandemic committee at the CCC meetings.

Table 1 - FOIA request answers			
	Full information	Partial information	No information
Name of members and alternates	64% (14)	36% (8)	0% (0)
Presence at CCC meetings	4,5% (1)	9% (2)	86,5% (19)
CV's	45% (10)	18% (4)	36% (8)

Source: Author

Only one organization provided a full information on their members and alternates in the CCC, being the Office for nuclear control. The least clear answer came from the Ministry of Justice, where they avoided to answer some of the points utilizing a legal glitch and only provided a name list of their members and alternates in the CCC.

Only one organization provided full information about the presence of its members and alternates at the CCC meetings, and only 2 more organizations provided partial information about their members and alternates presence. As the presence is not trackable and neither the CCC secretariat, which is legally responsible for the records, did dispose any list or minutes from the meetings, we cannot track whether it was the members or their alternates present, and for the purpose of this paper there will be treated the same. CVs were directly provided, linked, or explained where they are retrievable by 10 organizations. 4 partially provided CV's and 8 provided no information in this area'.

We created a list of 73 members and alternates of the CCC. We aimed to gather the name lists, information about their age, gender, education: university + field of study, their current position, previous occupation and their partisanship. As FOIA requests did not provide all necessary information, extensive search of online sources (official organizational web pages, previous employment pages, social media – Linked In) was conducted. Here, information about 20 members and alternates was supplemented. Information about 6 delegates were in clash, and different names were provided by the organizations and different names by the secretariat, when asked. We can't distinguish who was an actual member of the CCC and is possible, that because of the lack of any list or minutes, all of them might have been at some point part of the CCC and therefore, also this contradictory information has been included. We managed to retrieve information about specific areas as explained in the table below.

Table 2 - Data about CCC members		
Identified CCC members	71	
Age information	33	46,5%
Gender information	70	98,6%
University name	40	56,3%
Field of study	41	57,7%
Current position	57	80,3%
Previous occupation	42	59,2%
Partisanship	70	98,6%

Source: Author

From the 73 members and alternates, we dispose with full or almost full information about 39 of them. For 25 of them we have satisfactory information and only in 9 cases information are insufficient. We also obtained information for the Red Cross and the Slovak Intelligence agency indirectly through the Secretariat of the CCC. Therefore, further analysis includes 71⁴ identified CCC members and alternates, as indicated in the table above.

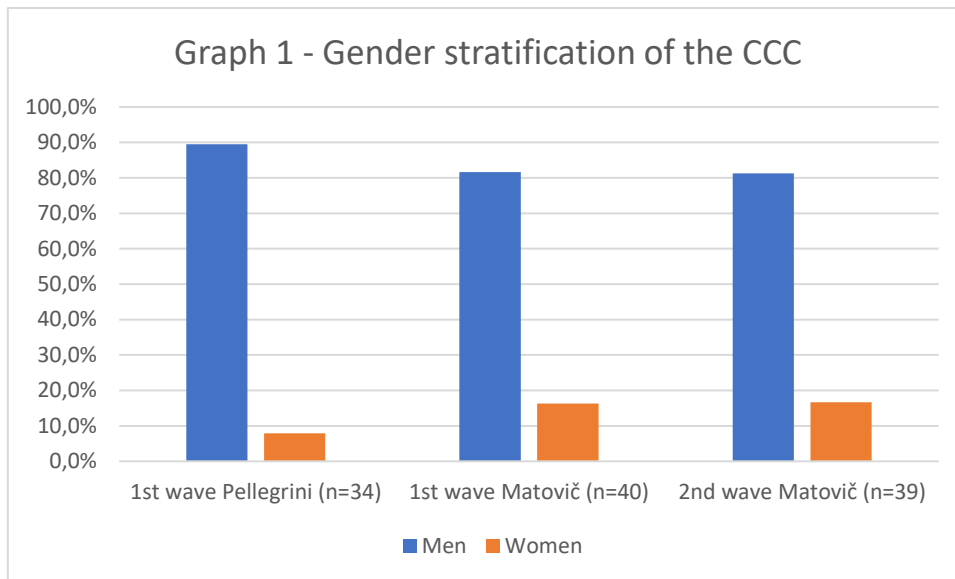
From these, separate clusters were created distinguishing those from the first wave in between 16 March 2020 until 14th June 2020 and the second wave from 1 October 2020 until 31st December 2020. The second wave is not fully covered due to low data access on the period from 1st January 2021 until 15th May 2021. Even if not initially planned in the research design, the government change during the first wave led to extensive personal changes also in the composition of the CCC. Therefore, not two, but three clusters were created called the first wave Pellegrini government, the first wave Matovič government, and the second wave Matovič government. It was not possible to divide the first wave to a specific date, as power transfer during the government is a longer process and asynchronously happens to various ministries and other government organizations.

Creating the profile of the CCC

Age and gender

Age information was obtained for 33 members of the CCC out of 71 of those who have been identified. In general, their median age has been 49 years, very narrowly ranging from 47 years during 1st wave Matovič government (25/49 members analyzed) and 2nd wave Matovič (25/48 member analyzed) Government to 50 years during 1st wave Pellegrini government (14/38 members analyzed). In comparison with the ministerial advisors, which are another part of the Slovak internal PAS, their median age (during time of recruitment) ranged from 36,5 to 41 years (Krajňák et al., 2020).

⁴ For further analysis, two members representing the Nuclear Control Office of nuclear control were removed, as they have not been invited to CCC meetings, as Covid-19 pandemics are out of their agenda.

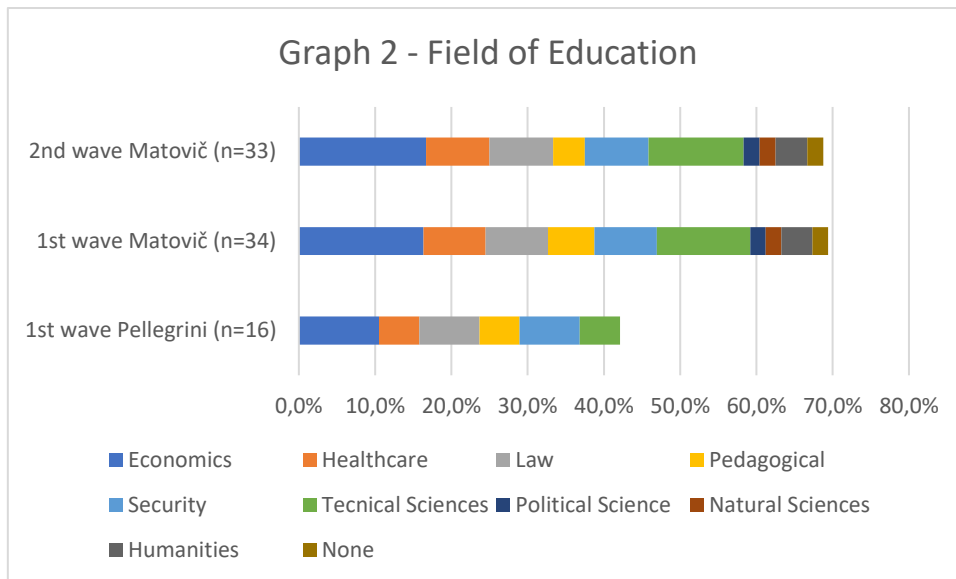


Source: Author

Regarding the gender aspect, from all the possibly analyzed members of the CCC (n=70), 10 were women. In the comparison, in case of ministerial advisors, 36% were female (Krajňák et al., 2020). In the Slovak public service in general, women account for 64% of public servants (Sedlačko and Staroňová, 2018). The number of women ranged from three during the first wave Pellegrini Government to eight in both waves during Matovič government.

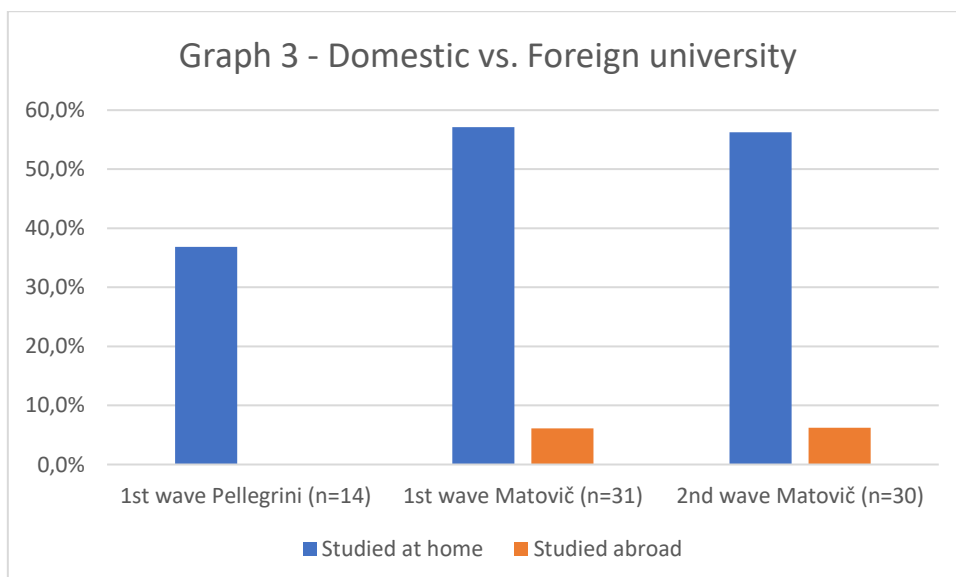
Education

Data about education were obtained for 57,7% (41) of members and alternates. Only one of these has no university education or any other higher qualification and with the rate of 97,6% their high level of education is very similar to those of ministerial advisors, which is at 93% (Krajňák et al., 2020). Similarly, to Krajňák et al. (2020), we also see a possible connection to Slovak administrative culture, where academic qualifications are directly related to the paygrade. Regarding the education of the CCC members, we have been concerned by two factors – the field of their education and whether they have been educated abroad, or domestically.



Source: Author

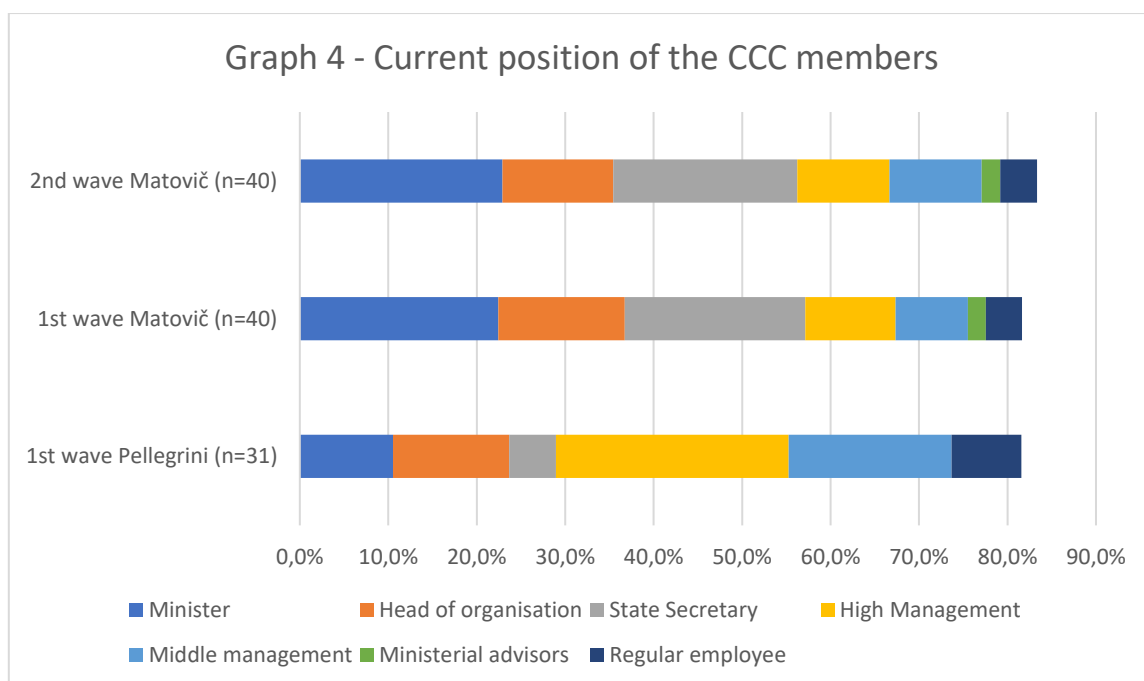
As seen in the above graph, the variety of field of education occurs between the 1st wave Pellegrini government and the first wave and 2nd wave Matovič government. In all cases, the top education is Economics. Technical sciences, law, healthcare, and Security are also highly represented. The presence of healthcare and security as a field of educations might be determined by the structure of the CCC, as various public health and public security organizations are in its structures. The high presence of law and economics was also similar in the case of ministerial advisors (Krajňák et al., 2020).



Source: Author

Data on university were obtained in 56,3% (40) cases and, as indicated in the table above, there is a strong presence of domestically educated people in the CCC. We did not retrieve information about any foreign university graduates in the CCC during 1st wave Pellegrini committee and only 3 in the latter 1st wave and 2nd wave Matovič. This is similar to the case of ministerial advisors where the claim of Krajňák et al., (2020) is, that foreign education is not an important factor of their selection. Both cases are a contract with analytical centers which are ministerial advisory bodies, where foreign high-level education is one of the factors of their recruitment (Sedlačko and Staroňová, 2018). Krajňák et al. (2020) draw a suggestion, that foreign education plays a minor role when minister is selecting his advisors. I go for a similar conclusion, as the members and alternates of the CCC are selected by the executive of the organization, and the process is very vaguely defined, thus leaving great space for tendencies like personal trust and preferences to prevail.

Current position of the CCC members



Source: Author

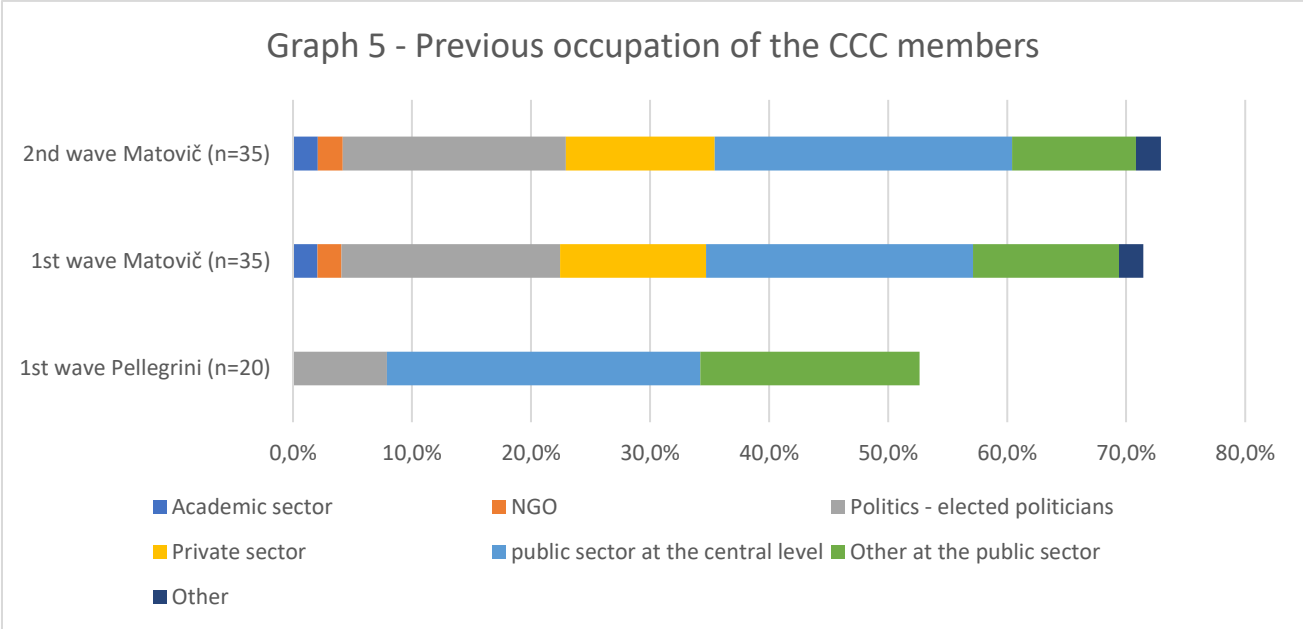
Information about the current position of the CCC members and alternates has been gathered for 80,3% (57) of identifies members. As indicated in the table above, there is a shift during the first wave between Pellegrini and Matovič government. As before the government exchange, the dominant part of the CCC was the high management 26,3% (10) and the middle management 18,4% (7). After the exchange these numbers went down to 10,2% (5) for high management and 8,2% (4) for middle management. The rise in the number of ministers and

state secretaries was imminent. Ministers rose from 10,5% (4) before the government exchange to 22,4% (11) and state secretaries from 5,3% (2) to 20,4% (8). Slovak top civil service, where the high and middle management is included, is having a great turnover rate after elections (Staroňová, 2015) and this trend is also visible here. This will be further discussed in the turnover rate sub-chapter.

The high and middle management from ministries was not replaced by their new counterparts in the CCC, but rather by ministries and state secretaries. Possible explanations are that in the time of both government exchange and pandemic crisis, the most feasible solution for ministers is to appoint themselves or their very close collaborators to be present in the CCC. These numbers still remained almost the same in the second wave. Possibly, this can be linked to a lack of trust of the new government into its civil service or a lack of capacity building of the new governmental parties.

The percentage of heads of organization is more stable, being 13,2% (5) before the government exchange and 14,3% (7) after. This will be also explained more closely in the turnover rate sub-chap.

Career paths



Source: Author

The table above presents the previous occupation of CCC members before they started to work on their current position in their sending institution. This information has been gathered for

59,2% (42) CCC members and alternates. As we see, across the waves there is a dominance of Public sector at the central level (1st wave Pellegrini – 26,3% (10); 1st wave Matovič – 22,4%(11); 2nd wave Matovič – 25%(12)). The known part of CCC during 1st wave during Pellegrini was composed only of people from the public sector at the central level 26,3%(10) others from the public sector 18,4%(7) and elected politicians and ministers 7,9%(3). During the 1st wave Matovič government and 2nd wave the CCC was more diverse, but with a higher number of elected politicians and ministers (from 7,9% during the 1st wave Pellegrini government to 18,4% during the 1st wave Matovič government).

A wider variety of previous occupations is seen after the governmental exchange. Private sector (1st wave Matovič 12,5% (6)) is represented and also one person from academia and NGO is present in the CCC. This might be explained by the fact that while previous social democratic government of Pellegrini was in continuity with previous social-democratic governments, Matovič government brought a lot of new people into the civil servant structures that were previously outside of public administration. This representation is also more similar to the career paths of ministerial advisors, as there is a strong representation of the public sector and private sector, and people that were previously employed in politics had their rise in numbers only after the governmental exchange from Pellegrini to Matovič government (Krajňák et al., 2020).

Turnover rate

Table 3 - Turnover rate			
	1st wave Pellegrini	1st wave Matovič	2nd Wave Matovič
Number of CCC members	38	49	48
Kept from previous composition	NA	18 (36,7%)	46 (95,8%)
New members	NA	31 (63,3%)	2 (4,2%)

Source: Authors

The turnover rate between the waves and during the government exchange is explained in the table above. Only about one-third of the new composition of post-election CCC was previously having a seat, and rest were new members. This has been partially discussed in the subchapter current position, as on the expense of high and middle management from civil service, ministers and state secretaries took place. On the contrary, in between the Covid-19 waves, during the

same government, one-member position ceased and only two new members were introduced, having only three in the composition in general. Two of those changes are both related to the same person – the former member for the Government office becoming the President of Police corps, but still being included into the CCC structures, but as a member for his new organization.

Table 4 - Turnover rate at ministries and Government office		
	1st wave Pellegrini	1st wave Matovič
Number of CCC members	22	31
Kept from previous constellation	NA	6
New members	NA	25

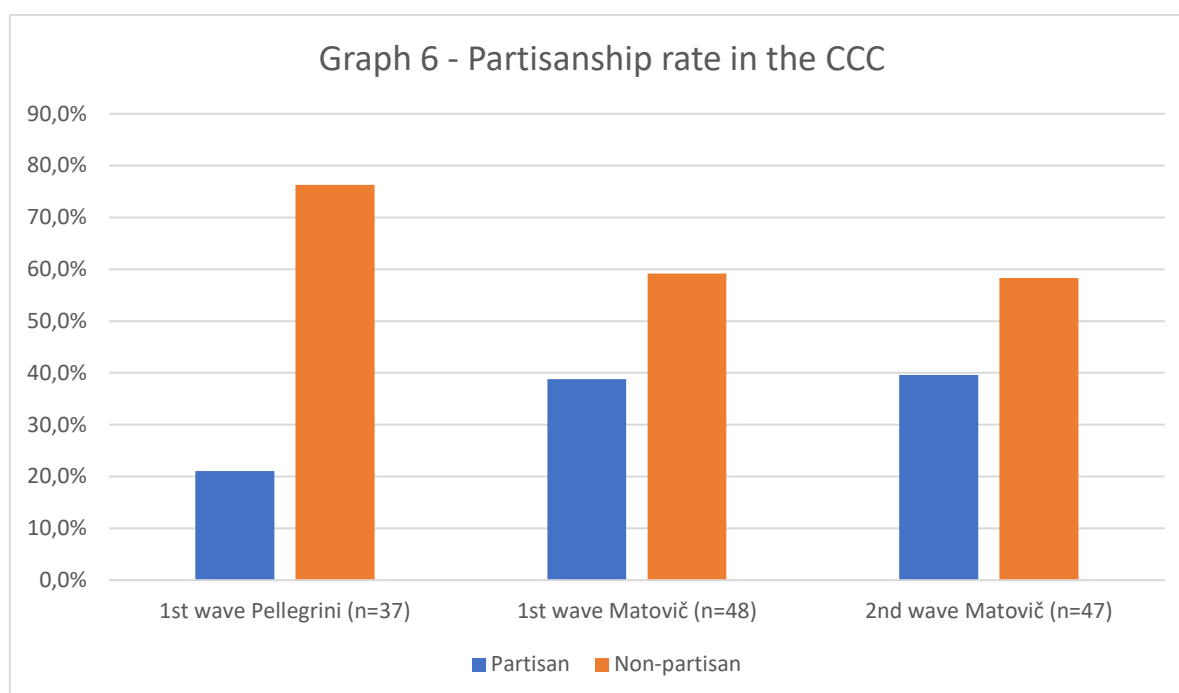
Source: Author

Table 5 - Turnover rate in the rest of member organizations		
	1st wave Pellegrini	1st wave Matovič
Number of CCC members	16	18
Kept from previous constellation	NA	14
New members	NA	4

Source: Author

The turnover rate (as indicated in table above) was high at central agencies (ministries and government office) where only three organizations – Ministry of Labor, Ministry of Finance, and Government Office did not change their CCC members. The Slovak top civil service has a great turnover rate after elections (Staroňová, 2015) and a traditional island of stability – the ministry of finance – was also confirmed in this case. In the rest of member organizations, only four new members have been added and the only changes occurred at the Administration of state material reserves (which had a huge corruption scandal), Slovak intelligence agency, and Firefighter corps.

Partisanship



Source: Author

70 out of 71 CCC members and alternates (for 1 we did not dispose his name) were checked on their partisanship either by direct stating of political affiliation in their CV or previously served as a politician, as we follow the operationalization of Spáč and Rybář (2020). Further, we included those that were on a party candidate list either in Elections to National Council in 2016 or 2020, Municipal elections in 2018 or self-governing regional elections in 2017. Politicization of policy advise can happen in order to support the government line (Veselý, 2013, Belyaeva, 2019). In the case of CCC, we see the increase of those related to political parties from 21,1% (8) to 38,8% (19) during the first wave after the government exchange. This can be explained by the increase of ministers and state advisors and decrease of high and middle-level management and was discussed in both the career paths and turnover rate sub-chapters.

Concluding remarks

The Covid-19 response and government performance are influenced by many factors including decentralization and agentification (Petridou, 2020, Capano, 2020, Toshkov et al., 2020), organizational cultures (Pattyn et al., 2020), government effectiveness (Capano et al., 2020; Toshkov et al., 2020) or the position of the Ministry of Healthcare and the career path of its minister (Toshkov et al., 2020). A marginal interest has been previously raised about the impact

of policy advice on the government performance. Regarding the advisory and expert bodies, their composition (Singh, 2020; Scally et al., 2020;), politicization (Capano, 2020; Freedman, 2020; Scally et al., 2020), and role conflation (Pearce, 2020) was addressed as one of the determinants of various policy choices, but was in the margin of interest of the scholars.

In my paper, we follow a very unique case study of the Central Crisis Committee in the Slovak Republic. In the Slovak Republic, there is a great imbalance about the antipandemic government performance in the first and second wave, yet, that provides an opportunity to study the changes in the policy advice. Additionally, Slovakia went through government exchange during the first wave, and in a country with politicized civil service and high turnover rate (Staroňová, 2015), observing the changes in the CCC could be contributinal.

From policy advice system actors, we decided to follow the CCC, as this one is directly giving recommendations to the government, is very close to the government structures, and serves as both consumer and producer of the policy advice. In general, Slovak PAS is very underexamined and only ministerial advisors (Krajňák et al., 2020) and analytical centers in ministries (Staroňová and Sedlačko, 2018) have so far been examined. The CCC is a committee where the board consists of members and alternates from 23 governmental organizations including the Government office, ministries, important healthcare and security agencies and 1 nongovernmental organization – the Slovak red cross.

In the attempt to answer the research question *How did the profiles of the Central Crisis change in first and second wave of Covid-19 pandemics in Slovakia?* we collected personal data by FOIA requests and intensive online research for 71 members and alternates of the CCC. From the initial aim to compare the CCC profiles from the first and second wave, the governmental change in Slovakia significantly influenced the composition of the CCC and I decided to compare three different compositions of the CCC being before and after government exchange during the first wave of pandemics, and during the second wave of pandemics.

We compared their profiles that consisted of their age, gender, education, current position, previous occupation and partisanship. The differences in the profiles did not vary by the waves, but by the governments. During the first wave, after the government exchange there was a high turnover rate in the CCC, which lead to differences in the profile. This turnover happens mostly at the ministries. Most of other government organizations remained stable in who do they appoint into the CCC:

Only minor changes occurred in the age and gender profile of the CCC. Here, the mostly male in their late 40`s and early 50`s and CCC is similar to ministerial advisors (Krajňák et al., 2020). Most of the CCC members across all three compositions were also domestically educated, and the field of economics is the most represented. The most visible change was in the current position of the CCC member – where a shift from the dominant presence of high and middle management to ministers and state secretaries occurred. This can be partially explained by the high turnover in Slovak ministries as described by Staroňová (2015), and the need of the ministers to quickly appoint a trustworthy member to the CCC already being in the pandemic, resulting in appointing themselves and their state secretaries. These appointments remained almost intact by the second wave and they have not been replaced by new high and middle managers from the civil service. Similarly, there is an increase in partisanship rate that almost doubles from 21,1% to 38,8% after the government exchange, which is probably connected to these ministerial self-appointments to the CCC. As there is a different body that consists directly of ministers – the Pandemic Committee – resolving the pandemic issue, by the CCC becoming more politicized and personally present by the people that directly are government might create a disbalance in the policy making process and should be examined further considering possible politicization effort.

The limit of this research is that only partial data about the CCC were gathered in the second wave, as data for 2021 could not be retrieved yet. Further, there have been many unclarities and contradictions in the names of the CCC members and alternates and no minutes or name lists from the meetings were provided, therefore not all CCC members were analyzed. Only in very few cases, we obtained the desired data about the CCC members.

The composition of the CCC was viewed as a possible factor that impacts the government performance during the pandemic. The link between the different performances of the Covid-19 waves in Slovakia and the different character in the selected PAS actor has not been proven. The impact of the CCC on the performance cannot be excluded neither - as in the beginning of the first wave, where most of the antipandemic measures were undertaken, the CCC still under the Pellegrini government had a very different composition. A further examination on the functioning of the CCC, the roles of its members, and how the antipandemic policy making is developed could provide a more concrete answer.

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