

Beyond the Curtain: Investigating the Dynamics of Patronage and Political Appointments in Hungary's Central Government

Kovacs Eva

Corvinus University of Budapest, Dept. of Public Policy and Management, Faculty of Economics, Budapest, Hungary

Hajnal Gyorgy

Corvinus University of Budapest, Budapest, Hungary

Molnár Gábor Tamás

Corvinus University of Budapest, Budapest, Hungary

Abstract: This study explores the dynamic landscape of patronage and political appointments within the Hungarian central government. The topic has a particular significance given the enduring dominance of a single political party in government formation since 2010. Despite this continuity, there has been a consistent turnover of influential figures and political appointees in the government. High-ranking political leaders surround themselves with reliable aides and often staff in civil service and other nonelected positions with their political associates.

Our research seeks to examine the characteristics of these patronage appointments and investigate the profiles, underlying motives driving the selection and replacement of key individuals within the government.

According to the literature political appointments are made particularly for the sake of political ‘control’ or as a ‘reward’ of political supporters. Based on our interview dataset we provide an empirical assessment of assumptions on the different motives of patronage in Hungary: whether it serves a function of reward of supporters in exchange for political services including electoral support, activism or party financing etc. Or political appointments can be rather seen as a ‘management tool’ for the political control of policy making and implementation.

By analysing profiles and motivations, we aim to contribute to a nuanced understanding of the evolving patterns of political appointments in Hungary in the last decades and shed light on the factors influencing this seemingly stable yet dynamically changing political landscape.