

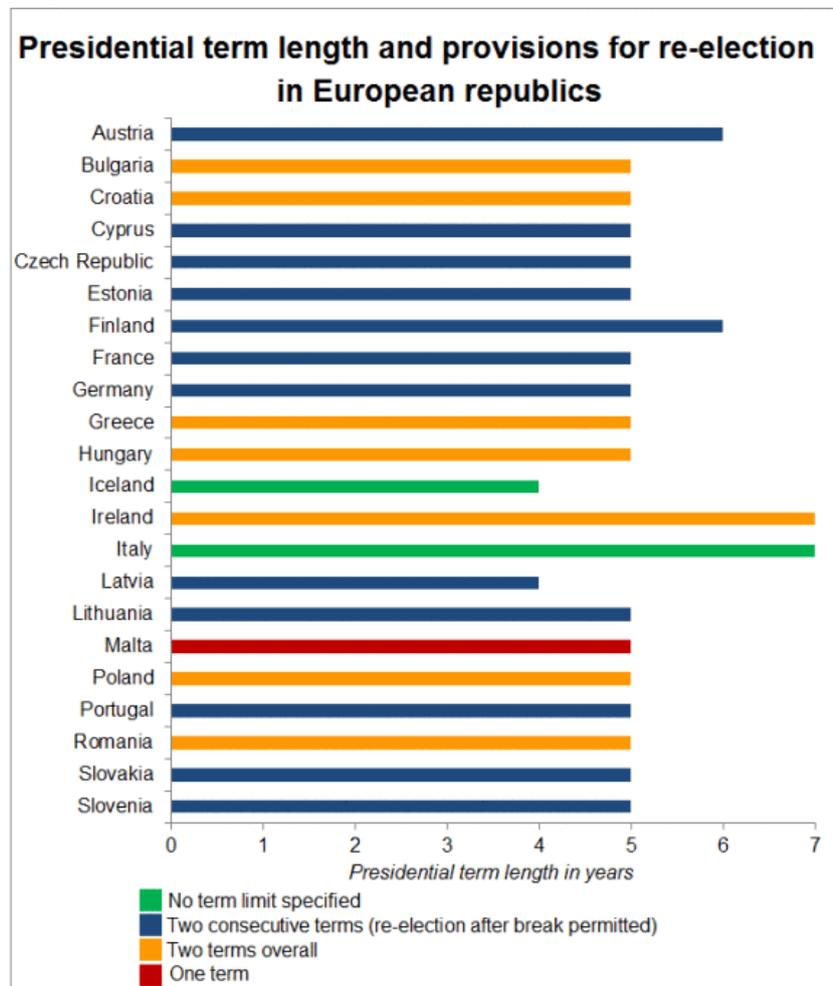
Presidential term lengths and possibilities for re-election in European republics

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I recently read up on the amendments made to the Czech constitution to allow for popular presidential elections and stumbled across Art. 57 (2) – ‘No person may be elected President more than twice in succession’ (which already applied to indirectly elected presidents) and wondered how it looks in other European republics and how it relates to term length. The results of my study of each country’s constitution are summarised in the bar chart below.

Term length

Term length is relatively uniform across European republics – in all but six countries a president’s term is five years. Exceptions can only be found in Iceland and Latvia (4 years), Austria and Finland (6 years), and Italy and Ireland (7 years). Interestingly, all presidents serving terms of six or seven years are popularly elected; yet, so is the president of Iceland who is only serving a four-year term.



Term limits

A limitation to two consecutive terms can be found in twelve out of 22 European republics, i.e. a former president who has already served two consecutive terms could theoretically be re-elected for a further two consecutive terms after ‘taking a break’. In Latvia, the constitution states that an individual may not serve as president longer

than eight consecutive years (which equates to two terms in office). In Portugal, the constitution specifies that a president who has already served two consecutive terms can only be re-elected as president after a break of at least five years. In other countries with a limit of two consecutive terms no such provision exists.

In seven out of the ten remaining republics, presidents can only be elected for two terms – irrespective of consecutiveness. In Malta, a president can even only be elected for one term (although the constitution is rather imprecise on the subject). In Iceland and Italy, there are no regulations on re-election. While it is the norm in Iceland that presidents serve several terms – since 1944 all presidents have served at least three consecutive terms (the current president Ólafur Ragnar Grímsson is in his fourth term at the moment), Italian president Giorgio Napolitano is the first Italian president to be re-elected.