



Weekly Briefing

Poland Social briefing:
Poland Social Development
Dominik Mierzejewski


China-CEE Institute

Kiadó: Kína-KKE Intézet Nonprofit Kft.

Szerkesztésért felelős személy: Chen Xin

Kiadásért felelős személy: Huang Ping

 1052 Budapest Petőfi Sándor utca 11.

 +36 1 5858 690

 office@china-cee.eu

 china-cee.eu

The latest social development in Poland has given the assumption that the Law and Justice government has strong support from the public opinion. The above-mentioned support is mainly driven by the pro-social policies delivered by the government. This, however, might be slightly challenged by the ongoing discussions on the political future of Donald Tusk, currently the president of the European Council.

According to the CBOS analysis after half a year of office of Mateusz Morawiecki gained the level of support for the prime minister, the government, and its policy is similar to that obtained by Beata Szydło's (former prime minister) government, especially in the last six months of its office. What should be observed the current government and the prime minister faces less criticism than the previous cabinet. But, what are the numbers? The satisfaction with the fact that the head of government is Mateusz Morawiecki is expressed by 49 percent of the respondents and increased of one percentage point compared to the May 2018 report. The dissatisfaction with the prime minister is expressed by 28 percent of the respondents and increased by 3 points. 23 percent (drop by 3 percentage points more than in May) took the answer "hard to say" and this number dropped by three percentage point. In June 2018 38 percent of respondents support the government, and in turn, 24 percent respondents declared themselves as the opponents and this number increased by three percent. The indifference to the government is declared by 33 percent. The CBOS also asked the respondents to assess the government's activities. The survey pointed out that after the May fall in his quotations, in June the critical assessments were changed. The current effects and action were taken by the cabinet are well-rated by 51 percent of respondents and this number increased of three percentage points compared to May, while 26 percent (unchanged) critically summarizes the government's achievements. The answer "hard to say"

was chosen by 23 percent of the respondents (decrease by three percentage points)¹.

Apart from the strong support for the government the Law and Justice party enjoy the high level of support. The Law and Justice domination are significant. Jarosław Kaczyński's party can count on 41 percent support - twice as much as the Civic Platform (20%) and Social Democrats and Kukiz'15 were just above the threshold (6% each). From the survey the Kantar Public (public opinion polls company) we acknowledge that only four parties would enter the Polish Parliament after the next elections. But what should be observed with the greatest interests is the possible outcome of the future presidential elections. If the presidential elections were held in June 2018 Andrzej Duda (the current president) and Donald Tusk (the president of the European Council) would be in their second turn. Here the Law and Justice candidate would be slightly victorious. The current president would be supported by 52.5 percent of respondents, while Donald Tusk by 47.5 percent. On the one hand, we need to stated that after 2.5 years of stable the Law and Justice rule, Andrzej Duda is highly rated by the society. There is no politician who could threaten him, even such an outstanding figure as Donald Tusk. From this perspective, we need to remember, however, that much can still change. Before the presidential elections, the parliamentary elections will be held and the final outcome of the election to the Polish Parliament might have the impact of the social preferences. In the previous opinion poll, Andrzej Duda had only 0.4 percent. advantages over Tusk. In a survey carried out at the end of April, Duda had 9 percent higher support than the former prime minister.

The question is how does Donald Tusk react to the current survey. Sometimes Donald Tusk delivers some statement that might suggest his willingness to be back to the Polish Politics. In his latest interview for Facts after Facts on TVN24, he was asked about the National Assembly, which was

¹ The CBOS survey was conducted on 7-14 June 2018 using the method of computer-aided direct interviews (CAPI) on a representative random sample of adult inhabitants of Poland, counting 1,029 people.

held on the occasion of the 550-year anniversary of Polish parliamentarism. According to the former prime minister, it was controversial to put the participants of the event under a tent. *It seems that the National Assembly dedicated to such a ceremony should take place in the parliament building* - said Tusk. According to his view, all of this indicates that the organizers of the event do not attach importance to the very essence of parliamentarism. The ruling party understands the obtained mandate as allowing "to do whatever they want". In his opinion, it is an authority that assumes a great risk of corruption and degeneration. However, this is not all. An important declaration was made by the head of the European Council and the former prime minister *If Jarosław Kaczyński decided to run, I would not hesitate a moment*. This might provide further basis for speculation whether he will run in the presidential elections. From Tusk's perspective, Kaczynski might be the candidate that he will win against. Radosław Sikorski in the "Tłit" program on the question of whether Donald Tusk will start in the Polish presidential campaign replied that he had talked to him about it two weeks ago. Sikorski, however, does not want to reveal the content of the conversation, because, as he said so far, *it will be their sweet secret*, and those concerned must "be patient". The former head of the Ministry of Defense and Minister of Foreign Affairs, however, stated that Donald Tusk would be a real, not painted president of Poland. At the end of the talks in the "Tłit" program, the politician admitted that he keeps his fingers crossed for the political future of Donald Tusk.

The decision taken by Tusk will be probably driven by the social support. According to the latest public opinion polls for Rzeczpospolita (the biggest newspaper in Poland) Andrzej Duda has 33.5 percent of support, while Donald Tusk 33 percent. In comparison with a similar study from six months ago, support for Donald Tusk increased by almost 12 percent, and support for Duda dropped slightly (in the previous survey, he gained over 36 percent). The third on the podium in the April survey Robert Biedron received 11.4 percent. support, followed by Paweł Kukiz (6.8 percent), Władysław Kosiniak-

Kamysz (3 percent), Janusz Korwin-Mikke (1.7 percent) and Adrian Zandberg (1.3 percent).

Due to the growing support for Donald Tusk, the government will strengthen its pro-social policies. Recently, the government has published a law on the creation of a special fund for support people with disabilities, to which all those working through the Labor Fund will be discharged. Additionally, the richest who earn over PLN 1 million annually during the year will be obligated to pay the new tax. A new tax on Polish rich people, so-called a “solidarity tribute”, was calculated for approximately four percent. The Solidarity Support Fund for People with Disabilities is a new instrument that is to help people with disabilities to function better in our country. As governmental sources say every year, approximately PLN 2 billion should appear on the fund's account. Where do the Law and Justices intend to take this money from? As the government calculates on the basis of tax returns for 2016, PLN 1.15 billion will come from the tax for the richest, and PLN 647 million from the Labor Fund. The costs for the budget were calculated at the level of PLN 2.6 million.

Who will pay the so-called solidarity tribute? Any natural person paying taxes in Poland, whose annual income exceeds PLN 1 million. The tax is to be 4%. and will be paid from a surplus of over a million incomes. It will be paid by every "pitcher", regardless of the type of activity carried out: people with income from a full-time job, but also entrepreneurs accounting for a linear 19-percent. or stock market investors, as well as people who receive income from pensions. The first tax settlement will concern the income for 2019, so in practice, millionaires will discharge it by submitting the annual settlement by the end of April 2020. The Ministry of Finance, which developed the assumptions of the new burden, calculates that it will cover about 25 thousand people.

Conclusions

Along with the upcoming elections, the current government will strengthen its pro-social policies, and The Solidarity Support Fund for People with Disabilities has become the very visible example. On the other hand, the opposition parties and Donald Tusk (if he decides to be back to the Polish policy) are lacking in the above-mentioned instrument. The only possible "card" the opposition might be played will focus on the state of democracy, rule of law and position of Poland in the European Union. This, however, as the public opinion polls indicate will not work in the current course of events. But in the future if the European Commission changes the rules of distributing the European funds e.g. cohesion funds, and make them dependent on the state of democracy, freedom and the rule of law will play the role in the Polish domestic affairs, and on the other hand might stimulate Tusk's decision to take part in the future presidential elections.