



Weekly Briefing

Poland Political briefing:
Political Campaigns before the Local Elections
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According to the latest public opinion poll, 65.9 percent of the respondents believe that Prime Minister Mateusz Morawiecki is the most active politician in the local government campaign. Moreover, 38.5 percent consider him as the most convincing. The following are Władysław Kosiniak-Kamysz (Polish People Party), Grzegorz Schetyna (Civic Platform) and Włodzimierz Czarzasty (Social Democrats Alliance). In the above-mentioned context the briefing discusses the major arguments delivered by the political parties in the ongoing local elections campaigns and tries to recognize the arguments that are more likely to provide the better elections results later this month.

During the latest meetings with the Law and Justice leader Jarosław Kaczyński in Łódź and Lublin Kaczyński raised the important issues for the local communities. First, the differentiation between deeds and PR or actions versus propaganda. According to him, the current government at the central level is very successful when it comes to real achievements. The second issue touched by the Law and Justice leader touches the issue of social mobilization. In the situation when the Civic Platform has the advantages in PR or propaganda, the Law and Justice should be close to the people and convince the people that the program for the local communities will not be the blackmail. In Łódź, the special program "activities for the renewal of Łódź" was announced. The new program sponsored by Waldemar Buda, the Law and Justice candidate for the president of the city, presents the new solutions for e.g. communication and public transportation in the city. As mentioned above another task necessary to achieve the goal at the local level is to build the unity of society. Jarosław Kaczyński said that only by social unity the local government can govern in the very successful way: *You have to build it because the local government only makes sense when there is a community behind it which the local government*

controls. Only then can he work well. Only then is it not enough to be in different places, to constantly show up, to smile at everyone, because it is the current power, and especially one person knows very well. But it's more than that. The different arguments were offered in Lublin, the city in the Eastern part of Poland. Kaczynski debated the choices between old power, old systems, connections, old structures and the good change, governance with the special plan for the region of Lublin. As for the central government policy, as said by the Law and Justice leader, the government has acknowledged the importance of the East part of Poland e.g. by implementing via Carpathia project. After the elections, this policy is announced to be continued. The biggest achievement at the local level should be based on the sustainable development policy, and as was said only people from the Law and Justice party can manage this kind of policy. From the above-mentioned statement the argument that the critical for the future development is the ability to cooperate between the self-government and the government. As declared by Mateusz Morawiecki the government in Warsaw is ready to cooperate with the local governments of different political parties, however, the cooperation between members of the same political structure will be smooth. This argument might also be used as the leverage in the local elections campaigns. In other words, if the electorate does not vote for the Law and Justice candidates, the money transfer from the central government might be limited. This is followed by the Law and Justice ideas for the further development of the local societies, the local people. During his visit to the company Remtrak (the train service), he admitted that at the local level there are various irregularities and the central government hopes to concentrate on the local communities and work for people. The Prime Minister also recalled the Law and Justice ideas for local governments announced by him at the local government convention, including a preview of the program for thermo-modernization of buildings, reduction of charges for waste treatment, reconstruction of bus and railway connections, popularization of access to high-

speed internet and PLN 300 million for supporting civic budgets in municipalities.

The different arguments were deployed by the opposition parties. Grzegorz Schetyna, during the regional convention of the Citizens' Coalition in Bydgoszcz, argued that this Law and Justice is responsible for the divisions in the country. Therefore, in his opinion, the ruling party cannot be allowed to take over power in local governments. Once the Law and Justice enter the local governments the so-called "Polish-Polish war" will be continued. The head of the Modern Katarzyna Lubnauer emphasized the liberal economic character of the Citizens' Coalition. She pointed out that modern Poland is a state that does not stifle Poles' initiatives with high taxes and an overcrowded bureaucracy. According to Katarzyna Lubnauer: *Liberalism is courage. We represent liberal Poland and we have the courage to oppose it to the Law and Justice Poland. Poland, which discourages work, poor Poland, Poland on welfare, social Poland.* The liberal arguments, however, was challenged by the leader of the Polish Initiative Barbara Nowacka. She stressed that local government policy must support citizens from the very beginning by providing free access to nurseries and kindergartens and "good, open, smart schools" in which children also learn to live in society and build relationships with other people. As seen above the coalition of the Civic Platform, the Nowoczesna and the Polish Initiative is full of contradictions. On the one hand, we have the liberal voices, that not necessary see the social policy as the important part of the program, on the other hand, we have more pro-people measures like the free public transportation. Moreover, the Civic Platform announces the liquidation of provincial offices and transfer of their competences to marshals, as well as the introduction of direct election of starostas – the leader at the county level. The Civic Platform proposes that all PIT and CIT revenue should remain at the local government level and strongly supports the development of self-government investments in the formula of public-private partnership.

The Polish People's Party presents the argument of man is the most important (man is in the center). The party displays about 5,000 candidates in the Mazovia region (central Poland). Adam Struzik, the Marshall of the Mazovia voivodship (province) informed that in almost all elections to municipal and county councils, the party will have its candidates. Five lists in the regional sejmik elections in Mazovia will be opened by women, and the other two lists by men. *This shows that we are not talking about gender balance, we are only introducing them in a real and practical way* - said, Struzik. Due to the fact, the Polish People's Party does not have own candidate for the President of the Polish capital, Struzik announced that the party had not yet decided who he would support in the election of the mayor of Warsaw. The leader of the party Wlodzimierz Kosiniak-Kamysz has tried to mobilize the electorate. During the meeting in Krotoszyn (Western Poland) he called for the support. After the local elections, as was said, the Polish People's Party will be either hosts or mercenaries, and once the party loses the elections it will be in the position of the slave. Kosiniak-Kamysz presents the party as the "normal party" that is not involved in so-called "Polish-Polish war" and does not play the dirty campaigns as done by the Civic Platform and the Law and Justice. In fact, both parties show that they do not care about the common people. *They do not think about what is happening in a village or village, because they are only interested in putting a club on their heads and gaining power* - noted the president of the Polish People's Party.

Conclusions

As discussed in the briefing the different parties present different arguments. Apart from the ideological disputes and PR the major difference between the Law and Justice and the Civic Platform with coalition parties is that the first consider the active role of the central government as the important part of the local development, the latter sees a more decentralized model of governance. This is visible in the presented programs in the local elections. The

Prime Minister Mateusz Morawiecki, as the head of government, promised more funds and money transfer from the central to local level, Grzegorz Schetyna promised more money from the local taxes and other payments. Due to the fact, that the central government has more incentives in the local election the Law and Justice might win in the majority of elections at the local level. The Civic Platform promises, to the certain extent, promise without the courage. Once they hope to leave more money at the local level the need to win the central elections and form the cabinet that is capable to conduct the promised policies. The second argument that illustrates the strongest position of the Law and Justice is the power for mobilization of the electorate. The coalition of the Civic Platform, Nowoczesna, and the Polish Initiative cannot present the comprehensive program. The inner divisions inside the coalition create the dilemmas for the electorate and finally leads to the defeat.