



Weekly Briefing

Poland Political briefing:
The Local governments' elections in Poland
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The policy brief discusses the latest development in the Polish domestic arena. After the local elections, both the ruling party and the opposition parties declared the victories. The picture, however, is far more complex. The basic question debates in the policy brief are what kind of signals were given by the results of the local elections signals for the Law and Justice and the Civic Coalition?

First, the elections enjoyed the highest voters turnover 54.90 percent with 16 million 344 thousand were given valid votes in the first round of elections, and 48.83 percent reached the ballot box in the second round. It counts over two million voters more than in the previous elections and the number of invalid votes has also decreased by almost 50 percent. The Elections were conducted up to 2 825 councils, of which: up to 2,477 municipal councils, of which: to 2145 municipal councils in municipalities up to 20,000 residents up to 332 municipal councils in municipalities over 20,000 residents; up to 18 district councils of the Capital City of Warsaw; up to 314 district councils; up to 16 regional assemblies. The total of 46747 was selected councilors are up to the number of 184 745 candidates, of which: 39526 councilors of municipal councils out of 133282 candidates, of which: 32175 councilors in municipalities up to 20,000 residents from 86479 candidates, 7351 councilors in municipalities over 20,000 residents from 46803 candidates; 425 councilors councils of the capital city of Warsaw from among 3261 candidates; 6244 councilors from poviats (counties) from 41148 candidates; 552 councilors of sejmiks in voivodships out of 7054 candidates. A total of 46745 councilors were elected, of whom: 39524 councilors of municipal councils, of which: 32173 councilors in municipalities up to 20,000 residents, 7 351 councilors in municipalities over 20 thousand residents, 425 councilors councils of the capital city of Warsaw, 6244 councilors

of poviats (counties), 552 councilors of voivodships. The elections were held at 34918 constituencies.

In the provincial assemblies the Law and Justice won 254 seats, the Civic Coalition - 194, the Polish Peasant Party - 70, Non-partisan local government - 15, and the Social-Democrats Alliance - 11.

The policy makers from both the ruling party and the opposition announced the victory. As announced by the Law and Justice the party achieved the best result in the history of local government elections ever achieved. The local government elections this year have shown that the situation is good. Over one million voters have gained Law and Justice in comparison with the result from 2014. Grzegorz Schetyna also announced the victory and by saying that the coalition with other anti-Law and Justice movement parties praised the Civic Coalition (together with Nowoczesna).

At the local assemblies elections, Law and Justice won in nine provinces (voivodeship), in six the Law and Justice have the majority that allows for shaping the independent governments. Previously the Law and Justice ruled only in one province namely in Podkarpacie (South-East Poland). Moreover, the Law and Justice won in 150 poviats (counties) and it means that somehow it will settle in self-governmental Poland. The election in cities is a big challenge for the Law and Justice. The party failed to win in many 100,000 cities, not only in big cities but also in medium-size cities. In the second round of local government elections, Law and Justice, not only did not succeed in winning any large city but also failed campaigns in smaller cities, for example in Radom, Nowy Sącz or Tarnów (Southern Poland). The greatest success of the Law and Justice is the seizure of power in 63 thousand residents of Chełm (Lublin Voivodeship).

In big cities e.g. in Warsaw, Łódź, or even Kraków the Civic Coalition will show not only the implementation of election promises but also a new, more social face. This is to be one of the arguments for the whole coalition in the

parliamentary elections. On the other hand, this will show that the Civic Coalition has not only liberal face, but also more prosocial.

The interesting dynamic was in the elections in the countryside, and from the perspective of the Polish Peasant Party was seen as the key local election battlegrounds have been the bitter competition for rural votes with the Law and Justice. In this area the Law and Justice policymakers concerned on a number of high-profile initiatives aimed at boosting its support in the countryside, including replacing the unpopular agriculture minister. For the Law and Justice voted the most voters in the villages - 39.3 percent. The Law and Justice also prevail in cities up to 50,000 residents - could count on 30.4 percent support here voters. The Law and Justice also has high ratings among farmers (42.8 percent with 31.8 percent of support in this group for the Polish Peasant Party and 8.5 for the Civic Coalition), pensioners (41.9 percent at 25.6 percent for Civic Coalition and 13.6 percent for the Polish Peasant Party) and workers (38.8 percent at 18.2 percent for the Polish Peasant Party and 15.8 for Civic Coalition).

Local government elections are often treated as big public opinion polls before parliamentary elections. That is why many parties treat them like a warm-up before the actual race. Moreover, the result of the local elections can answer the few questions. First, how strong are the Law and Justice? Jarosław Kaczyński's party, however, still remains the greatest political force in Poland. However, there are two problems. The first problem is that the PiS gets lower results by up to 10% in local government elections. from results in national elections. The second problem is the coalition ability. Even when winning in a given province, Law and Justice may not rule it. The second question: how weak is the opposition? This question was answered before the election. The opposition parties created a common list and it shows that once the opposition is united it takes more vote in the elections. The situation is different in case of the Polish Peasant Party that in fact lost the support in the countryside. The fourth

question: will the local government elections change? Many people think that the elections do not change anything. The more self-government, in which the same president wins for the fifth time and for the third time the same marshal of the province. But the choices give rise to certain trends, sometimes poorly perceptible. The elections in 2006 gave the Civic Platform the new strength that allowed the victory a year later. The elections in 2010 arrested the Law and Justice dynamism, resulting from emotions after the Smolensk catastrophe. The elections in 2014 showed tiredness with old arrangements, even if it was still covered by election inaccuracies.

Conclusions

From the perspective of the future parliamentary elections, the Law and Justice and the Civic Coalition tested the scenarios for next year elections. It was a test whether Prime Minister Morawiecki can end the campaign as a running prime minister, so having his numerous responsibilities, also in this respect whether he can go 2-3 places a day. He was able to do it, it was calculated that in this campaign he was in about 200 places for 200 meetings and this is a signal for the Law and Justice president Jarosław Kaczyński that Prime Minister Morawiecki is a person who can pull a campaign, he is not afraid of hard work. The Prime Minister passed the exam and will be well evaluated by his activity, and this was not a parliamentary campaign, it was not a campaign of Mateusz Morawiecki, he did not compete, he only supported the Law and Justice candidates. The result in diet councils is largely due to the activity of the prime minister. On the other hand, Morawiecki with his past of governing one of the biggest Polish banks tried to attract the voters in big cities. Due to the fact that the Law and Justice lost in big and medium-size cities was the failure. This was especially visible in Warsaw, where Partyk Jaki lost with Rafał Trzaskowski. This, however, allowed Jarosław Kaczyński to announce the victory in the local government elections. On the other hand, the Civic Coalition has the sense of a

positive breakthrough is much greater than in the Law and Justice. If the Law and Justice do not yet have a strategy for the time after the election, the Civic Platform idea - as it appears from our talks - is simple. Success generates success, and victories in large centers, especially in Warsaw, are to ensure momentum for European and parliamentary elections. The future coalition between the Civic Platform and Nowoczesna is not formulated yet, however, both sides see the potential for future cooperation.

From the above-mentioned perspective the Law and Justice will concentrate on the electorate in the countryside, where the Polish Peasants Party has the political influences, while the Civic Platform and Nowoczesna will mainly campaign in the big and medium-size cities. These assumptions are derived from the results of the local elections, and from the fact that the Law and Justice tested several variants in the big cities and all attempts failed.