



Weekly Briefing

**Latvia political briefing:
Transition From the 13th to 14th Parliament:
Election Results Known**
Institute of Economics at the Latvian Academy of Sciences


China-CEE Institute

Kiadó: Kína-KKE Intézet Nonprofit Kft.

Szerkesztésért felelős személy: Chen Xin

Kiadásért felelős személy: : Feng Zhongping

 1052 Budapest Petőfi Sándor utca 11.

 +36 1 5858 690

 office@china-cee.eu

 china-cee.eu

Transition From the 13th to 14th Parliament: Election Results Known

Summary

The convocation of the 13th Parliament (Saeima) has been a very turbulent time, dealing with the growing geopolitical tension and the crisis caused by the pandemic. During the convocation, the party "KPV LV" disintegrated, which forced the replacement of the Ministers of Economy, of Interior and Welfare. Also, due to the replacement of three different "Development/For" ministers, the party's opportunity to enter the new Saeima was deprived. Despite this, the 13th Saeima convocation has been the longest lasting convocation in the history of democratic Latvia. All the events of the previous convocation have not been forgotten and this is reflected in the results of the 14th Saeima elections - seven political parties entered it - "New Unity", "Green and Farmers' Union", "United List", "National Alliance", "Stability!", "Latvia First", "Progressives". Work is currently underway to form the government.

Introduction

The Constitution of the Republic of Latvia stipulates that the Parliament (Saeima) is elected in equal, direct, secret, free and proportional elections, and full Latvian citizens who have reached the age of 18 on election day have the right to vote. Latvian Saeima elections are held once every four years, and in each convocation, 100 representatives of different parties, whose parties receive more than 5% of the public's votes, enter. 14th Saeima elections were held on October 1, 2022, and they were held in five constituencies - Riga, Vidzeme, Latgale, Zemgale and Kurzeme. Already on the night of October 2, Latvians followed the results of precinct elections, and the summary of all votes counted in the middle of the day showed that representatives of 7 different parties have been enrolled in the 14th Saeima. More about the biggest upheavals of the 13th Saeima convocation, the results of the 14th Saeima elections and how the government formation negotiations are going in this Latvia Political briefing.

I Look Back at the 13th Saeima

In the previous elections, seven political parties and their associations entered the Saeima. For the third time in a row, "Harmony" won the largest voter support, followed by "KPV LV" and "New Conservative Party" (Currently - "Conservatives"). "Development/For!", "National Alliance", "Union of Greens and Farmers" and "New Unity" also entered the Saeima. After the elections, the coalition was formed by five political forces: "New Unity", "New Conservative Party", "Development/For!", "National Alliance", as well as part of the "KPV LV" faction. After the unsuccessful attempts of several party leaders to form a government, Arturs Krisjanis Karins, the leader of the smallest faction in the Saeima, became the Prime Minister (PM).

During the functioning of the 13th Saeima, several deputies left their factions. Deputies who left their faction are considered non-affiliated or independent deputies. Many of the initial candidates elected from the "KPV LV" party in the 14th Saeima elections ran from small parties such as "For Each and Every One" and "Sovereign Power", among others.

On November 14, 2019, the 13th Saeima adopted the controversial amendments to the Law on Financing Political Parties, which envisages a more than seven-fold increase in party financing from the state budget. This was done despite the initiative to postpone the funding increase until the election of the 14th Saeima, which received more than 12 thousand signatures. On November 15, 2019, the collection of signatures for recalling the 13th Saeima began. It was signed by around a total of 54,254 people but the Saeima was not dismissed.

Despite the upheavals caused by the crisis caused by Covid-19 and the current geopolitical situation, on January 5, 2022, the government led by PM Karins became the longest-serving government in the history of democratic Latvia, having been in power for 1078 days. During the convocation, the Minister of Economy changed 3 times - initially it was Ralfs Nemiro, who was prohibited admission to state secrets, then he was replaced by Janis Vitenbergs, who had to give the position to Ilze Indriksone after the "ultimatum" issued by his party "National Alliance" to leave the government, if the former Minister of the Interior Marija Golubeva would not resign after the police inaction at the May 9 Soviet "Victory Day" celebrations in Riga.

The loudest, however, was the resignation of the Minister of Health Ilze Vinkele on January 7, 2021, when PM Karins expressed no confidence in her regarding the procurement of Covid-19 vaccines. A criminal case was initiated in which the minister was accused of

"inaction" in connection with the ordering of Covid-19 vaccines. In her place, the current Minister of Health Daniels Pavluts took the position.

In total, in the 13th convocation of the Saeima, there were 3 different Ministers of Economy, 3 Ministers of the Interior, 2 Ministers of Education, 2 Ministers of Culture, 2 Ministers of Welfare, 2 Ministers of Health, as also 2 Ministers of Environmental Protection and Regional Development. The Minister of Agriculture Kaspars Gerhards, the Minister of Justice Janis Bordans, the Minister of Transport Talis Linkaits, the Minister of Defence Artis Pabriks and the Minister of Foreign Affairs Edgars Rinkevics are currently set to manage to complete the entire convocation.

II Results of the 14th Saeima Election

According to information from the Central Election Commission, this election the voter turnout was higher than in the 13th Saeima and 12th Saeima elections. According to the preliminary results (Figures 1 and 2), "New Unity" is followed by "Union of Greens and Farmers", "United List" is in third place, followed by "National Union". Also, the 5% barrier to enter the Saeima has been overcome by "For Stability!", which was founded by Aleksejs Roslikovs and Valerijs Petrovs - two of the four Riga City Council deputies who were expelled from the "Harmony" party in 2019 for gross violations of party discipline, which contributed to the change of power in the Riga City Council; as well as the "Latvia First" party, whose leader Ainars Slesers has not been active in politics in recent years. Also, "Progressives" - a social-democratic, centre-left and progressive political party - will be represented in the Saeima for the first time.

None of the parties that won more voter support in the 13th Saeima elections 4 years ago - "Development/For!", "Harmony", "Conservatives" and "KPV LV" - will not be represented in the next Saeima.

Figure 1.

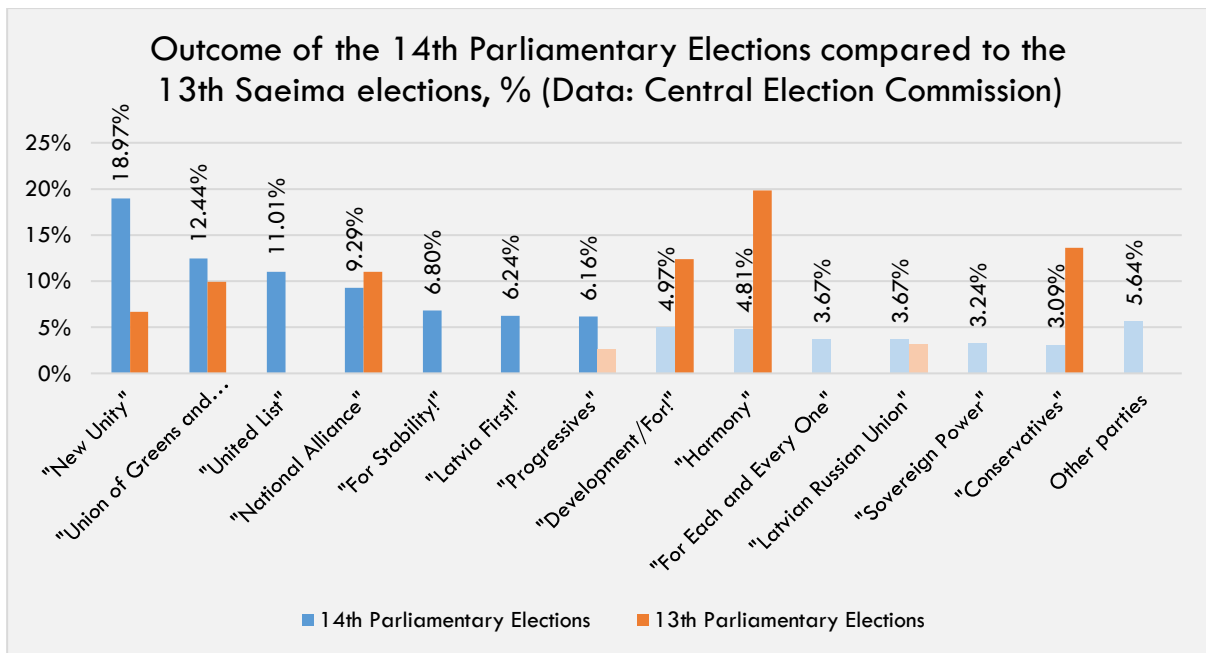
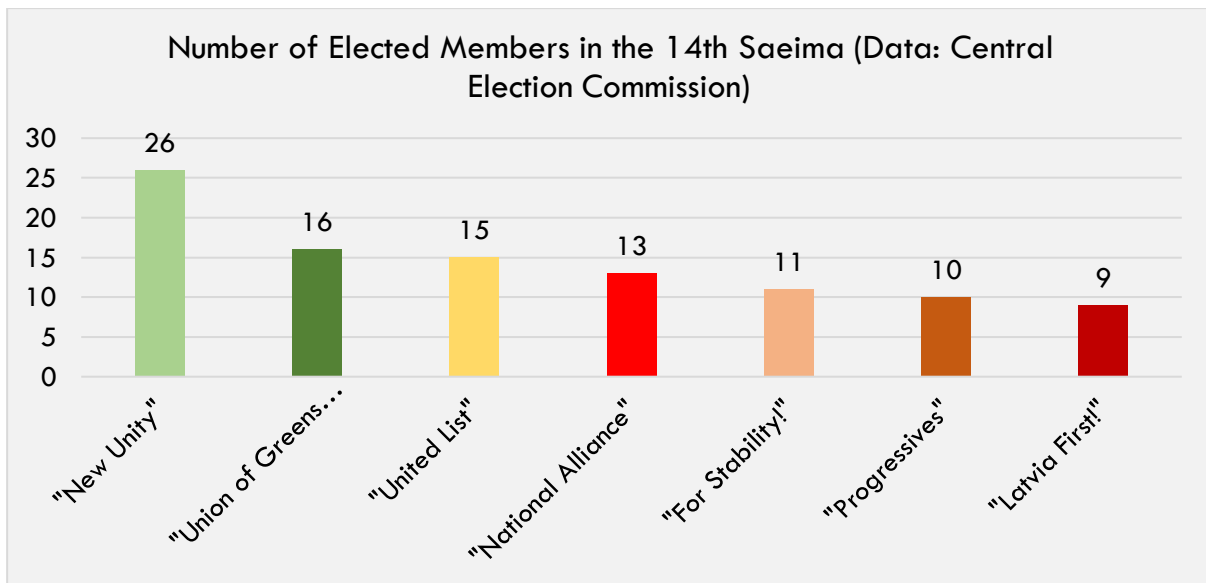


Figure 2.



Shortly after the publication of the first preliminary results of the 14th Saeima elections, the potential political forces that entered the parliament outlined the so-called red lines or conditions they are ready to work on in the new coalition, as well as mentioned possible cooperation partners. "New Unity" politician Edgars Rinkevics stated that it would be logical if the next coalition was formed by the winner of the 14th Saeima elections. "New Unity" has stated it will not cooperate with the "Union of Greens and Farmers" in the new coalition if it does not distance itself from Latvian politician Aivars Lembergs. The Union has already

announced that it will under no circumstances distance itself from Lembergs as a candidate for the position of Prime Minister. Also, the "National Alliance" has indicated that it would not be able to work together with the "Progressives" in a coalition, because it considers their values to be opposites. The negotiations for the establishment of the new Saeima have been entrusted to the current PM Karins.

Conclusions

The time of convocation of the 13th Saeima has been very turbulent. Experiencing various geopolitical exacerbations in the region and living with the management and economic crisis of industries caused by the Covid-19 pandemic, countless times politicians have had to take risks and consistently take responsibility for their actions. Changes of ministers, which are directly related to these external factors, are justifiable and were even desirable, however, the same cannot be applied to the party "KPV LV", which due to internal disagreements had to make changes in the cabinet itself, because of which the achievement of the set goals stagnated. Despite that and the collected signatures of citizens, PM Karins has been able to control these blows and withstand all four years of the convocation. The results of the 14th Saeima elections also show the population's support for his party has tripled. In the next convocation of the Saeima, 7 fundamentally different political parties will have to run, in addition to three newcomers. It is already noticeable that creating a coalition is a difficult task. Although a large part of the population of Latvia sees the non-entry of the Russian-speaking Harmony party into the new term as positive, the more radical politicians of "For Stability" will cause issues. The new government will have very responsible tasks - to ensure the internal and external security of Latvia in the context of an unprecedented geopolitical crisis, the stability of the economy during the global recession and the rapid polarization of society. This can be done with a strong and stable coalition, which has not been easy to build.

References

1. <https://sv2022.cvk.lv/pub/velesanu-rezultati>
2. <https://www.saeima.lv/lv/13-saeima>
3. <https://ltv.lsm.lv/lv/raksts/15.09.2022-i-vinkele-stajas-tiesas-prieksa-par-vakcinu-iepirkumiem.id272069>
4. <https://www.lsm.lv/raksts/zinas/latvija/provizoriskie-rezultati-14-saeima-ieklust-7-politiskie-speki-lideros--jauna-vienotiba.a476191/>
5. <https://www.lsm.lv/raksts/zinas/latvija/14-saeima-visticamak-iekluvusas-partijas-iezime-sarkanas-linijas-un-iespejamos-sadarbibas-partnerus.a476185/>
6. <https://www.lsm.lv/raksts/zinas/latvija/knab-sacis-resorisko-parbaudi-par-putina-iespejamajiem-maksajumiem-sleseram.a477207/>