

In office for the last nine years the Reform Party of Taavi Roivas came out ahead in the Estonian general elections

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Results

Abstract :

The general elections that took place in Estonia on March 1st benefited the country's two "big" political parties. The Reform Party (ER) of Prime Minister Taavi Roivas, appointed as head of government a year ago (26th March 2014), came out ahead in the elected after nine years in office. He won 27.7% of the vote and 30 seats (-3) in the *Riigikogu*, the only chamber in Parliament – the Centre Party (K), the main opposition party led by the Mayor of Tallinn and former Prime Minister (1991-1992), Edgar Savisaar, won 24.8% of the vote and 27 MPs (+1).

The Social Democratic Party (SDE) of outgoing Defence Minister Sven Mikser took third place with 15.2% of the vote and 15 seats (-4). It suffered a setback as did the Pro Patria Union-Res Publica (IRL) led by Urmas Reinsalu, which won 13.7% of the vote and 14 seats (- 9) and is the grand loser in this election. It lost ground because of the progress made by the two parties which are to make their debut in the *Riigikogu*: the Free Party of Estonia, created on 20th September last and chaired by Andres Herkel which won 8.7% of the vote and 8 seats and the People's Conservative Party (EKRE) a nationalist party formed after the merger in 2012 of the People's Union and the Patriotic Movement led

by Mart Helme, which won 8.1% of the vote and 7 seats.

Turnout was almost the same as registered in the previous general election on 6th March 2011 totalling 63.7% (- 0.2 points).

296,109 people i.e. one third of the electorate fulfilled their civic duty early between 19th and 25th February -176,491 of whom did so electronically, a new record for the country (their number totalled 140,846 in 2011). We should note that an electronic vote can be cancelled by a vote in a polling station on the day of the election.

General elections results March 1st 2015 in Estonia

Turnout : 63,7%

Political Parties	No of votes won	% of votes	No of seats
Reform Party (ER)	158 888	27,70	30
Centre Party (K)	142 440	24,80	27
Social Democratic Party (SDE)	87 256	15,20	15
Pro-Patria Union-Res Publica (IRL)	78 688	13,70	14
Free Party of Estonia	49 885	8,70	8
People's Conservative Party (EKRE)	46 768	8,10	7
Others	9 296	1,60	0
Independents	888	0,20	0

Source : <http://rk2015.vvk.ee/voting-results.html>

The Reform Party registered its third consecutive electoral success. In all likelihood Mr Roivas will retain his post as head of government. However he might be obliged to widen the coalition that he had formed with the Social Democratic Party to date, since the two parties do not have the majority in the Riigikogu (45 seats out of 101). *"The Reform Party will be able to form a government. However negotiations over the coalition undertaken with the Social Democrats and the conservatives in the Pro-Patria Union-Res Publica might be difficult,"* declared Ahto Lobjakas, editor of the daily *Postimees*. All of the parties have ruled out any alliance with the Centre Party. President of the Republic Toomas Hendrik Ilves earlier indicated that the leader of the party which came out ahead would be asked to form the government.

During the electoral campaign the outgoing government coalition highlighted the concern raised by Russia's activities. Estonia, 25% of whose population is Russian-speaking, fears Moscow's intentions, which since 2008, has justified all of its interventions in neighbouring countries by its desire to protect Russian populations living there. Prime Minister Taavi Roivas said *"The Centre Party has a completely different approach from us regarding national security and the war in Ukraine."*

The Estonian parties accuse Edgar Savisaar of remaining silent over Russia's actions in Ukraine. The Centre Party wants Tallinn to draw closer to Moscow, necessary in its opinion to guarantee the country's security. It would like Estonia to be a bridge between Europe and Russia. The Centre Party leader accuses his adversaries of playing on the electorate's fears and of using the "Russian threat" to scare them.

Concern on the part of the Estonian population grew more acute on 25th February last when Moscow launched major military manoeuvres involving around 2000 soldiers and 500 military machines on Estonia's borders (and on those of Latvia). NATO responded by dispatching fighter planes by organising several military exercises in the Baltic States. On 25th February the day after the Estonian national day Americans took part in a military parade in Narva – a town that lies on the Russian border.

Social issue – living standards and wages – were the focal point of the campaign. Estonia is in good economic health- growth totalled 1.8% in 2014 (2% planned for 2015); government debt lies at 10.4% of the GDP (it is the lowest in the euro area - the average is 96% – and 85.4% in the European Union)

and a government deficit which is negative (-0.1% against 3.3% on average in the EU). Unemployment affects 6.3% of the working population. Finally household consumption is rising sharply thanks to a 5% wage increase last year following a reduction in labour tax.

Aged 35, Taavi Roivas is the youngest head of government in the EU. Originally from Tallinn he is a graduate in Economic Sciences and Business Administration from the University of Tartu. He started his professional career as an advisor to the Minister of Justice Mart Rask. In 2003, he became the director of the cabinet of the Minister for the Population and Ethnic Affairs Paul-Eerik Rummo, and in 2004, it was appointed advisor to Prime Minister

Andrus Ansip (ER).

Taavi Roivas was elected MP during an election on 4th March 2007. He became Social Affairs Minister in Andrus Ansip's government in 2012 until 14th March 2014 when he was appointed as the Reform Party's candidate for the post of Prime Minister. Two days later he was asked to form the new government by President of the Republic Toomas Hendrik Ilves who appointed him Prime Minister on 26th March.

Taavi Roivas now has four years to build "a Nordic, liberal Estonia". A country with Nordic living and security standards – a leader in terms of "individual freedom and economic security" - an ambition he asserted on 17th January.

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