

The Social Democratic Party of outgoing Prime Minister Algirdas Butkevicius may arrive ahead in the Lithuanian general elections.

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Analysis

On 9th April last the President of the Republic of Lithuania Dalia Grybauskaite set the dates for the next general elections for 9th and 23rd October next. The publication of the decree heralded the start of the electoral campaign.

1,461 people on 14 lists (and from 16 political parties), 31.7% of whom are women, are running in this election. 10 people are running as independents.

The elections should lead to the formation of a government comprising several political parties. Since the general elections on 10th and 28th October 2004 no political party in Lithuania has won more than 20% of the vote, and coalitions of three or four parties have become a tradition.

The most recent poll by Delfi at the end of August forecast a win for the Social Democratic Party (LSP) of outgoing Prime Minister Algirdas Butkevicius with 17.2% of the vote. The Farmers' and Greens Party (LVZS) is due to win 13.4% drawing ahead of the Homeland Union-Lithuanian Christian Democrats (TS-LKD), which is due to win 10.7%. "The result of the latter party is generally higher than predicted in the polls," indicated Linas Kojala, the director of the Centre of Studies on Eastern Europe of Vilnius.

The Labor Party (DP), a left-wing populist party led by leader of Parliament, Loreta Grauziniene, is due to win 6.6% of the vote; the Liberal Movement (LRLS), 6.3% and For Order and Justice (TT), a right-wing populist party of former President of the

Republic (2003-2004) and presently led by MEP Rolandas Paksas, is due to win over the vital 5% threshold in order to enter parliament, with 5.1%.

The political parties running

The Social Democrats might retain the majority. They have governed Lithuania for the last four years in coalition with the Labour Party and For Order and Justice. Electoral Action for Lithuanian Poles (LLRA), which represents the country's Polish minority (around 7% of the population) took part in government from 2012 to 2014. Four years after their victory the Social Democrats still lead in terms of voting intentions even though they suffered at the start of the year due to a corruption scandal over construction work in protected areas near Druskininkai.

The main opposition party, the Homeland Union-Lithuanian Christian Democrats (TS-LKD), led by Gabrielius Landsbergis, the grandson of the hero of the country's independence, Vytautas Landsbergis, holds the majority in urban areas (the party won 15 of 18 mandates in Vilnius and the country's second biggest town, Kaunas, in the last general election on 14th and 28th October 2012) whilst the Social Democratic Party leads in the rural areas of the country. It is however being challenged by the Farmers' and Greens Party led by Ramunas Karbauskis. For its part the TS-LKD, which has set the goal of winning 40 to 45 seats in the Seimas (the only chamber of parliament) has to reckon with the Liberal Movement (LRLS), which clearly beat it in Vilnius during the local elections in 2015.

Last May the Public Prosecutor launched legal proceedings against the leader of this party, Eligijus Masiulis for "influence peddling", illegal gain and for accepting a bribe of 106,000€ from Raimondas Kurlianskis, the Deputy CEO of MG Baltic which is one of the country's biggest industrial groups (manufacture, trade, real-estate and the media). The former quit his seat as MP on 20th May and was not replaced in parliament since the general election was to take place less than six months later. Antanas Guoga was appointed interim leader of the LRLS. The LRLS has been losing ground fast in the polls and may disappear from the Seimas after the next election.

Conversely the Farmers' and Greens Party seems to be doing well and may – according to many observers – recover its position as kingmaker after this election. Since last spring it has enjoyed sizeable support since it was joined on 23rd March by Saulius Skvernelis, the then Home Affairs Minister (he was replaced on 13th April by Tomas Zilinskas; independent) who is one of Lithuania's most popular personalities.

The leader of Electoral Action of Lithuanian Poles, Waldemar Tomaszewski, chose not to stand in this election so that he could retain his seat as MEP. "Our party does not want to lose its European mandate which we deem important. We are members of the third biggest group in the Strasbourg parliament (European Conservatives and Reformists, ECR) of which I am one of the signatories," he declared.

The Lithuanian Political System

Lithuania has one chamber of parliament, the Seimas, comprising 141 members, elected every four years according to a mixed voting method: 71 MPs are appointed by a majority system and the other 70 according to a list-based proportional vote with a distribution of seats using a simple quota and the highest remainder, with Lithuania forming a single constituency. A party has to win a minimum of 5% of the vote cast in order to be represented in parliament (7% for a coalition). In the constituencies where there is a majority vote, any candidate winning the absolute majority of the vote in the first round – if turnout reaches at least 40%, is declared elected. If turnout

is below this percentage the candidate who has won the most votes (and the vote of at least 1/5 of those registered) is elected. A second round is organised if these conditions are not met. The candidates of the country's two main parties – Homeland Union-Christian Democrats (TS-LKD) and the Social Democratic Party – generally win most of the seats in the majority vote (around 60% of these).

Any party that wants to take part in the general election must have the support of a minimum of 1000 members. The candidates must be aged at least 25.

8 political parties are represented in the present Seimas:

- the Social Democratic Party (LSP), created in 1896 and led since 2009 by outgoing Prime Minister Algirdas Butkevicius, with 38 seats ;
- Homeland Union-Christian Democrats (TS-LKD), the main opposition party founded in 1993 and led by Gabrielius Landsbergis, with 33 seats;
- Labor Party (DP), member of the outgoing government coalition, created in 2003 by Loreta Grauziniene, has 29 seats;
- For Order and Justice (TT), founded in 2002 and led by Rolandas Paksas. Member of the outgoing government, it has 11 seats;
- the Liberal Movement (LRLS), founded in 2006, it has 10 seats;
- Electoral Action of Lithuanian Poles (LLRA), founded in 1994, led by Waldemar Tomaszewski, it has 8 seats;
- the Way of Courage (DK), founded in 2012 to counter corruption, led by Jonas Varkala, 7 MPs;
- the Farmers' and Greens Party (LVZS), a merger of the Farmers' Party (LVP) and the New Democratic Party (NDP), led by Ramunas Karbaukis, 1 seat.

3 seats are occupied by independent MPs.

Reminder of general election results 14th and 28th October 2012 in Lithuania

Turnout: 52.93%

Political Parties	Proportional Vote			Majority Vote	Total No of seats
	No. of votes won	% of votes won	No. of seats	No. of seats	
Social Democratic Party (LSP)	251 610	18,37	15	23	38
Homeland Union –Christian Democrats (TS-LKD)	206 590	15,08	13	20	33
Labor Party (DP)	271 520	19,82	17	12	29
For Order and Justice (TT)	100 120	7,31	6	5	11
Liberal Movement (LRLS)	117 476	8,57	7	3	10
Election Action of Lithuanian Poles (LLRA)	79 840	5.83	5	3	8
Way of Courage (DK)	109 448	7,99	7	0	7
Farmers’ and Greens Party (LVZS)	5 141	3,88	0	1	1
Independents				3	3
Others	122 345	8,93	0	0	0

Source : http://www.vrk.lt/statiniai/puslapiai/2012_seimo_rinkimai/output_en/rinkimu_diena/index.html

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