

Surprise in the 2nd round of the election in Lithuania in which the Farmers' and Green Party came out ahead in the election.

Corinne Deloy

Results
2nd round

The Farmers' and Green Party (LVZS) won in the second round of the Lithuanian general election on 23rd October. Led by Ramunas Karbauskis it now has 56 seats in the Seimas, the only chamber of parliament. It drew ahead of the Homeland Union-Christian Democratic Party (TS-LKD) of Gabrielius Landsbergis, which has 31 MPs and the Social Democratic Party (LSP) of outgoing Prime Minister Algirdas Butkevicius, which won 17 seats.

The Liberal Movement (LRLS) won 14 seats, Electoral Action for Lithuanian Poles (LLRA), a party representing the Lithuania's Polish minority led by Waldemar Tomaszewski, won 8 seats, likewise For Order and Justice (TT), a populist, right-wing party led by Rolandas Paksas. Turnout totalled 38%.

"The general election result shows that people want to see new faces. They are not happy with the policy undertaken over the last few years but what they do want is still difficult to say. The candidates of the Farmers' and Green Party are not very well known," declared Ramunas Vilpisauskas, Director of the Institute for International Relations and Political Science in Vilnius.

Saulius Skvernelis, one of the most popular personalities in Lithuania played an important role in the Farmers and Green Party's victory. Aged 45 and from Lithuania's second biggest town, Kaunas, Mr Skvernelis is a newcomer to politics. Former head of the national police, he became Home Affairs Minister in 2014. In this position he acquired the image of an honest man, who has been extremely active in the fight to counter corruption. On 23rd March last he joined the Farmers' and Greens Party (he was replaced in office by independent Tomas Zilinskas on 13th April).

The Farmers' and Green Party has promised to increase economic growth and salaries to stop the emigration of many Lithuanians, a theme that formed the heart of the electoral campaign debate. The population of the Baltic republic has contracted

by 600,000 people over the last fifteen years and now totals 2.9 million. Many Lithuanians, notably the youngest, leave to live abroad in the hope of finding higher salaries. The average gross salary lies at around 712€ (2015), and is one of the lowest in the European Union. The Farmers' and Green Party also aims to modify the labour code which was adopted just a few months ago, to reduce the number of ministries and to create a State monopoly regarding the distribution of alcohol.

The party of outgoing Prime Minister Algirdas Butkevicius, which promised further rises in the minimum wage and civil servants' pay was punished by the electorate, which is dissatisfied with living standards (employment and wages were the two most common reasons according to the polls). The Social Democrats also paid the price for introducing the new labour law (making employment more flexible) and for their involvement at the beginning of the year in a corruption scandal involving the construction of buildings in protected areas near Druskininkai.

The Farmers' and Green Party will not however be able to govern alone. *"I am prepared to speak with all of the conservatives and the social democrats,"*

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declared Saulius Skvernelis, who also maintained that he wanted to form a "responsible and rational" government. The formation of the future team in government might prove complicated, since the political identity of the Farmers' and Green Party is itself rather ambiguous and the Homeland Union-Christian Democrats, who were forecast to enter government, are not accustomed to sitting in second place. "A coalition will be formed, we shall choose

the people who want to undertake change," indicated Saulius Skvernelis. The party's leader Ramunas Karbauskis, is not due to take up any government responsibilities.

More : <http://www.vrk.lt/2016-seimo/rezultatai?srcUrl=/rinkimai/102/2/1306/rezultatai/lt/rezultataiVienm.html>

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