

Law and Justice (PiS) in office wins the elections in Poland

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Results

Law and Justice (PiS), the party of outgoing Prime Minister Mateusz Morawiecki, chaired by Jaroslaw Kaczynski, won the parliamentary elections on 13th October in Poland. According to still partial results the PiS won 43.59% of the vote and 235 of the 460 seats in the Diet (Sejm), the lower house of Parliament. It is therefore in a good position to take an absolute majority.

The Civic Coalition (KO), which comprises the Civic Platform (PO) led by Grzegorz Schetyna and Moderne (Nowoczesna), a liberal party founded by the economist Ryszard Petru from the World Bank and led by Katarzyna Lubnauer, came second with 27.4% of the vote and 134 seats. It is followed by Lewica (The Left), a coalition that rallies the Democratic Left Alliance (SLD), Wiosna (Spring), founded and led by Robert Biedron, Razem (Together), the Socialist party of Poland (PPS), the Labour Union (UP) and several feminist and secular movements won 12.56% and 49 seats. The Left will therefore return to the benches of the Diet after a four-year absence.

The Polish Coalition, which brings together the People's

Party (PSL), chaired by Wladyslaw Kosiniak-Kamysz, and Kukiz'15, a populist party created by Pavel Kukiz, took fourth place in the election winning 8.55% of the vote and 30 seats.

Finally, the Freedom and Independence Confederation, an alliance of several populist, ultraliberal, nationalist right-wing parties, including KORWIN, the party of former MEP, Janusz Korwin-Mikke, the National Movement (RN) led by Robert Winnicki, the Confederation of the Polish Crown (Korona) and the Union of Christian Families (ZChR), will be making its debut in the Polish Parliament since it won 6.81% of the vote and 11 MPs.

"The arrival of the left and the far right provides for a mixed house," indicated Stanislaw Mocek, a political expert and rector of the University Collegium Civitas.

Just under half of the Poles fulfilled their civic duty: turnout totalled 48.03% i.e. -2.89 points less than in the previous parliamentary elections on 25th October 2015.

Parliamentary Elections in Poland

13th October 2019

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Results of the parliamentary elections 13th October 2019 in Poland

Diet

Turnout: 48.03%

Political Parties	No. of votes won	% of votes won	No. of seats
Law and Justice (PiS)	8 051 935	43.59	235
Civic Coalition (KO)	5 060 355	27.4	134
Lewica (The Left)	2 319 946	12.56	49
Polish Coalition	1 578 523	8.55	30
Freedom and Independence Confederation	1 256 953	6.81	11
German Minority	32 094	0.17	1

Source : <https://wybory.gov.pl/sejmsenat2019/pl/wyniki/sejm/pl>

Senate

Turnout: 48.03%

Political Parties	No. of votes won	% of votes won	No. of seats
Law and Justice (PiS)	8 110 193	44.56	48
Civic Coalition (KO)	6 490 306	35.66	43
Polish Coalition	1 041 909	5.72	3
Lewica (The Left)	415 745	2.28	2
Lidia Staron		0.58	1
Krzysztofa Kwiatkowskiego		0.44	1
Wadim Tyszkiewicz		0.35	1
Démocratie civile		0.25	1

Source : <https://wybory.gov.pl/sejmsenat2019/pl/wyniki/senat/pl>

"Although we faced a powerful front we managed to win (...) we have four years of hard work ahead of us", declared Jaroslaw Kaczynski when the results were announced. "We have to think about what we have succeeded in doing and about what made led part of society not to support us."

Victory, which had been expected, became reality. The party in office for the last four years is to continue its generous social policy in the next term. During the electoral campaign the PiS promised a further increase in the minimum wage, presently set at 2,250 zlotys, which is due to rise to 4,000 in 2023, a repeat payment of the thirteenth month of retirement pension (and the allocation of a fourteenth month for those with the

lowest pensions), a new family allowance, a further increase in taxes and the reduction of social charges for small businesses. The PiS hopes to consolidate its "Polish version of the Welfare State" as Jaroslaw Kaczynski defines it. "During the transition the results of growth left the country or were given to the Polish economic elite. Today they are returning to the purses of most of Polish society," stressed outgoing Prime Minister Mateusz Morawiecki.

Boosted by a favourable economic context (GDP growth has risen on average by 4% yearly since 2015), between 2015 and 2019 the PiS has unrolled a vast, generous programme of social aid: introduction of a monthly allowance of 500 zlotys (125€), called the

500+, paid for each child in families with the lowest revenues and as of the second child in families with an average wage (this measure has now been extended to all children), the allocation of a thirteen month in retirement pension, a decrease in income tax rates from 18% to 17%, an increase in social aid paid to the handicapped and farmers, free medicines for the over 75's and finally the end of income tax on workers under 26. Mateusz Morawiecki's government has also reduced the age of retirement (to 65 for men and 60 for women), it has renationalised several banks and taxed certain financial institutions in order to make the "economy Polish again".

"The support enjoyed by Law and Justice must not be seen as the sign that the Poles have become nationalist or xenophobic. It is rather more a sign of the party's efficacy and its ability to mobilise the electorate via policies based on social transfers," maintained Pawel Zerka, a researcher at the European Council's think tank for foreign affairs. Some analysts also believe that ultimately these direct transfers given to the Poles will threatened public services.

Apart from the social benefits, with its condemnation of members of the LGBT community, whom the party

is quick to present as Poland' enemies, the PiS has succeeded in finding a way to mobilise and consolidate its electorate against those who the party deems as "threat to the nation's identity and the Polish State," to quote Jaroslaw Kaczynski

Although the left is making its comeback to Parliament, the opposition forces have failed to take any ground and impede the rise of Law and Justice. Its campaign mainly focused on criticism of the party in office, which proved to be an ineffectual strategy. "We were above the law. We did not feel that the battle was an honest one, that the parliamentary elections were fair," declared the leader of Civic Platform, Grzegorz Schetyna, adding, "cooperation between the parties and the opposition is the only possible way. Everything lies before us, especially the presidential election^[1], and we shall be ready, and we are going to win it, it is the promise we have made."

"Law and Justice have the absolute majority and it does not need allies to govern, but the party does not have an adequate majority to reject a presidential veto. The opposition now has to work on the presidential election next year," indicated Stanislaw Mocek.

1. Planned for spring 2020.

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