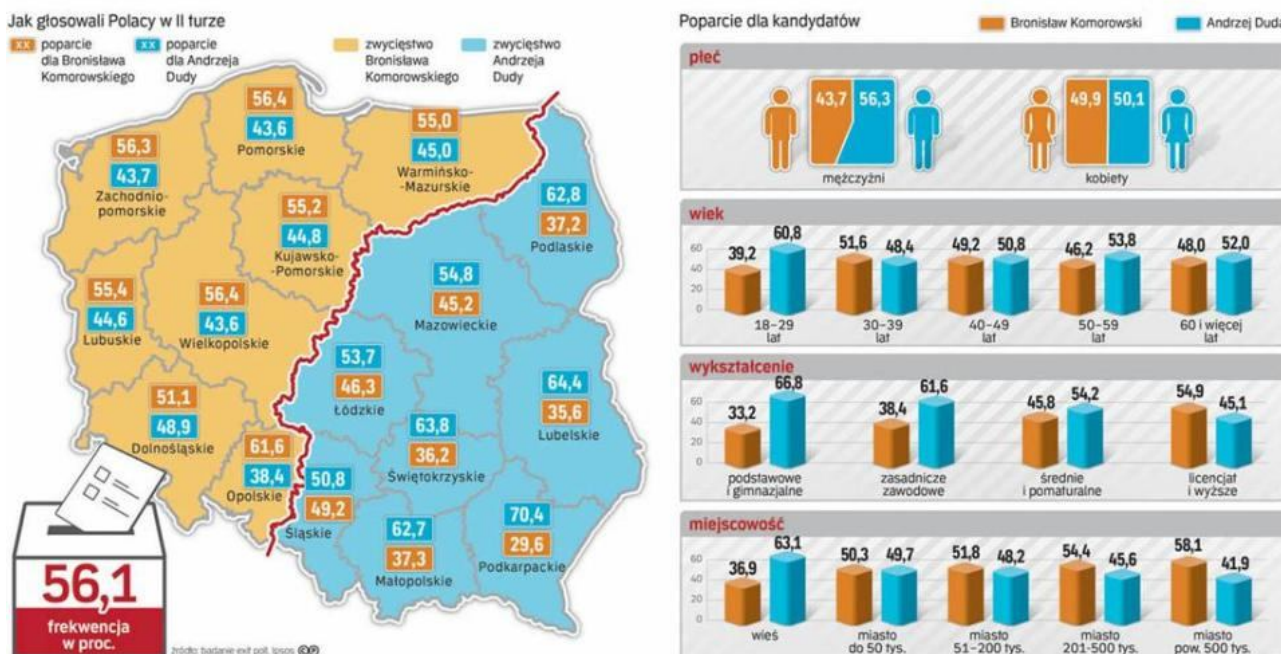


UL. WIEJSKA 12
00-490 WARSAW
POLAND
TELS: (+48 22) 628-2418, 629-5608, 621-9866
FAX: (+48 22) 628-4617
E-MAIL: poland@cecgr.com
WEB: www.cecgr.com

ANDRZEJ DUDA WINS POLISH PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION

Marek Matraszek, Founding Partner

In what will be seen as one of Poland's greatest shock election results of the last two decades, Andrzej Duda according to exit polls has won the Polish Presidential race against incumbent Bronislaw Komorowski, **scoring 52% of the vote against Komorowski's 48%** in a close-fought campaign. Although the final results have yet to be announced by the State Electoral Commission, it is unlikely that the actual votes still to be counted will change this result. The turnout of 56% was also one of the highest in Poland's Presidential elections. See the graphic below for a detailed breakdown of the candidates' votes by geography, sex, age, education, and size of town.



Duda's victory is all the more impressive given that at the start of the campaign, he was a completely unknown politician to most Poles, despite having been a member of the European Parliament, a Deputy Minister of Justice, and a minister in the Chancellery of the late President Lech Kaczynski. Yet from an electoral position which even a month ago seemed hopeless, he managed not only to narrowly beat Komorowski in the first round of the election two weeks ago, but now to grasp the grand prize in an uncompromising win in the run-off. Duda will probably be sworn in on the 6th August, and will be Poland's President until at least the end of his first term in the summer of 2020.

How and why this result happened will rage over the next days and weeks, as will an inquest into the methodology of Poland's pollsters – who had completely misjudged the vote a fortnight ago, and who even last Friday were showing Komorowski as being narrowly in the lead. Several factors are key in explaining the result. The root cause was the drift away from Komorowski of many voter groups who had backed both him in the past, and in parliamentary elections the ruling Civic Platform (PO) party. Over the five years of his term Komorowski, linked closely to the PO, was seen as having done little to protect the interests of the youth constituency, entrepreneurs, taxpayers and in general Poland's aspirational generation. These voters did one of three things: stayed at home, voted in the first round for the anti-establishment Pawl Kukiz and now transferred their vote to Duda, or at some point in the last few years emigrated altogether from Poland.

With the demobilisation of his support on the one hand, Komorowski faced a voter base of Duda energised by the latter's populist message focussed heavily on jobs, welfare, life chances, farmer issues and Poland's pension age – all of which hit key voter groups that felt neglected by the last eight years of PO government. Duda also subtly separated himself from the leaders of the main opposition Law and Justice (PiS) party who remain controversial and who barely put in an appearance during the campaign, which instead focussed on the youthful Duda himself and his photogenic family. Although he tried to distance himself from the PO in the campaign, Komorowski had for too many years been seen as uncritically supporting the ruling party, and the increasing unpopularity of the current government of Ewa Kopacz was a huge millstone for him. Neither did the twenty-year age gap between the two candidates work in Komorowski's favour. Duda, in getting over 50% of the vote, seems to have crashed through the notorious "glass ceiling" of PiS by attracting support from voter groups and geographical areas that were traditionally PO strongholds.

Duda's grass roots campaign of meeting voters in usually neglected parts of the country and talking to them about their real day-to-day issues also paid off, and contrasted heavily with Komorowski's campaign which focussed on his statesmanlike gravitas and avoided large scale rallies with real voters, instead relying on carefully staged speeches to audiences of PO party activists. Reeling from his first round defeat, Komorowski then lost credibility by flip-flopping on key policies at the last moment, and by looking desperate in appearing on a talk show with Poland's leading right-on "yoof" TV presenter. Finally, PiS – long seen as behind the curve on electoral techniques – unleashed a well-run campaign on Twitter, YouTube and Facebook that both ridiculed and attacked the ruling President in equal measure. Faced with impending defeat, the Komorowski campaign increasingly relied on scare stories about Duda himself, and ended symbolically when in a last-moment tweet Komorowski bizarrely accused Duda supporters of being fascists.

Komorowski's defeat is a huge shock to the ruling establishment, which even a month ago could not conceive of its candidate losing to an inexperienced and seemingly upstart opponent. Now the focus will be on the impact of the result on the PO, both internally and in terms of its fortunes for the upcoming parliamentary elections. Although the party is hugely rattled, its leaders know that to unleash an internal witch-hunt at this moment would do even more damage to the party prior to the October parliamentary elections. Their instinct will be to rally round, perhaps making Komorowski PO party leader after he steps down from the Presidency in August and seeking to capitalise on the near 50% vote that he personally achieved on Sunday. The time for a final internal reckoning in the party will come after the autumn elections, which most now expect PO to lose.

For PiS, Duda's victory is a huge achievement and gives the party real momentum going into the autumn elections. Duda will now argue that as President he cannot effect many of his election promises without a supportive government, and will surely leverage his popular support on behalf of the parliamentary PiS campaign. With PO on the ropes, PiS will look also to the third-placed candidate of the first presidential round, the anti-establishment Pawel Kukiz, to make good on his

intention to form a protest party - which if it matches the 20% achieved by Kukiz in the elections will become a party with whom PiS can form a coalition and have a comfortable majority in the new parliament. Had Komorowski won, even a PiS victory in the autumn would have allowed the PO substantial influence over politics through the ability of the President to veto key future government legislation. Now that option has gone, leaving PiS the potential masters of the entire Polish political scene.

Looking ahead, most of the focus will be now on the key nominations that Duda will make in his Chancellery, such as Chancellery Head as well as ministers responsible for foreign and domestic policy. It remains to be seen how many will be core PiS politicians, or whether Duda will cast his net wider. Also crucial will be nominations to the National Security Office and its Chief, given the influence the Office has over the military as well as Polish defence and security strategy. Upcoming over the next year are also nominations where the President is key, such as the National Bank of Poland, the Radio and Television Council, as well as Constitutional Court. If PO loses the October parliamentary elections, the period of cohabitation with Duda will be short – three months at most – but even in that period Duda will surely seek to pressure the PO by initiating popular legislation and challenging the PO to vote it down in parliament during the election campaign.

Duda's victory is of course a victory for Duda personally, and involves the sudden entry onto the Polish political scene of a hitherto completely unknown player. Many feel that this result lines Duda up as the eventual successor to PiS leader Jaroslaw Kaczynski, who until now has been without an obvious heir apparent. Duda's authority will now be such that at the appropriate time he will be able to take over the party completely uncontested. As for Kaczynski himself, this result makes him the natural candidate to be Prime Minister after the October elections, should PiS win. Unlike in 2005, this time Kaczynski will face a demoralised and divided PO party, and probably a stable coalition partner in the shape of the Kukiz movement.

With a young and energetic President at the helm of the Polish State, this will mean Poland shifting gears in both domestic and foreign policy for the next four to five years at least. The details will emerge in due course, but it can be expected that in foreign policy Duda will seek a much more forward posture in relation to Brussels, and present himself as “defender” of the Polish national interest within the EU. This may lead to more open conflict over key issues with both Berlin and Paris, and also with the Brussels establishment – where of course arch-rival former PM Donald Tusk is ensconced as head of the European Council. Tusk himself harbours Presidential ambitions in 2020, and much of Duda's dynamic with Europe will be driven as much by the personal rivalry between Duda and Tusk as it will be by specific policy issues. If anything, Duda can be expected to pursue a much more pro-US policy line than the previous President, whilst on Russia and Ukraine – especially given the policy constraint of Poland within the EU and NATO – there will be less change. Domestically, with a probable PiS government after October, Duda will have to make good on key election promises such as lowering of the retirement age of Poles, reducing key taxes, whilst increasing regulation and taxation of foreign banks and supermarkets in Poland. For Duda and PiS, a guide is the Fidesz government of Viktor Orban in Hungary, which is shaped by a similar internal policy agenda but which has paid the price of criticism and isolation within the EU as a result.

Much more about the political impact of Duda's victory will become clear over the next few days and weeks, but Poland is in store for a dramatic five months until the parliamentary elections – with more changes after that, as politics undergo what has now become a pattern of political shake-out every ten years or so. 1995 saw the shock defeat of Lech Walesa in Presidential elections against the post-communist Aleksander Kwasniewski, and 2005 saw the collapse of the ruling post-communist SLD party and the rise of the Civic Platform. Now in 2015, Poland is witnessing the slow dusk of the PO, an unexpected revival of PiS, and new forces in the shape of Pawel Kukiz. Polish politics will be very different in the future - again.