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Local Elections: Initial Campaign Outlook



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PM Morawiecki announced the dates of the local elections nearly two weeks ago. Since then, the campaign has officially kicked off. The main vote will take place on the 21st of October, with the second round of voting for voivodes, mayors, and city presidents taking place on November 4th. The election campaign fervour will last until the 2020 presidential race, with European and Parliamentary elections in between. The government will shift its tone and bet on less controversial figures while the opposition will kick its anti-PiS narrative into higher gear.

On Monday PiS began its local campaign offensive, dubbing it a “programme marathon”. Leading PiS figures are to visit regional capitals in the next weeks and months, with 16 meetings and rallies scheduled just for this week. At the beginning of July, PiS MEP Tomasz Poręba became the ruling party’s campaign manager for the local elections. Poręba is perceived as a close confidante of PiS leader Jarosław Kaczyński, being one of his most trusted sources about the state of affairs in the European Parliament.

This week, Poręba announced that a party convention will take place at the beginning of September. There, Jarosław Kaczyński will officially begin the election campaign, present a new slogan, and outline PiS’ vision for local governments. It is already known that in its campaign PiS will focus on agriculture, infrastructure, and healthcare. Poręba also stated that Kaczyński will be actively touring the country alongside top PiS figures. This came as a surprise to some commentators as the party’s leader has been less active in public events, amidst speculations of ill-health.

While PiS has had a relatively coherent communication strategy, the lead opposition party PO is looking to reach out to new voters and respond to years of accusations of elitism. PO has already sponsored a series of billboards across Poland depicting PiS leader Jarosław Kaczyński with caption that “PiS took millions”, referencing bonuses awarded by previous PM Szydło. Still, PO party leader Grzegorz Schetyna is not only focusing on finding new voter groups; he seeks to convince moderate PiS voters to stay at home. A negative campaign, however, is not enough for PO. PiS’ response that Schetyna’s party has not offered coherent policy alternatives is finding fertile ground among Poles. With a possible regrouping of left-wing parties and groups, and the maverick Kukiz’15 movement to take into account, PO will not have an easy task in maintaining its lead in local governments.

CEC Government Relations is the leading political communications consultancy in Central Europe, providing strategic political and media intelligence, monitoring and analysis for Western multinationals in the region. Key expertise includes the defence, energy, environment, IT, financial and extractive industry sectors. CEC also has experience in media management, local government, and third-party mobilisation as an integral part of its communications activities. The Warsaw office works closely with other CEC offices in Czech Republic, Slovakia and Hungary, as well as its partner agencies in other European Union countries.

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