



CEC Weekly Political Update **19th October 2018**

Local Elections this Sunday

On Sunday Poles will choose their councillors in communes (*gmina*), cities, counties (*powiat*), and regional assemblies. The first round of voting for Presidents, Mayors, and Woyts will also take place, with the second round on 4 November. The local election campaign ends today at midnight. On Saturday and Sunday, campaigning is prohibited. Unofficial and partial exit polls will begin appearing on Sunday evening. The State Electoral Committee (PKW) is likely to announce official partial results of the local elections on Monday morning – the PKW is supposed to call several consecutive conferences to update results. The final results can be expected on Tuesday evening or Wednesday morning.

The exact time for the publication of results depends on the efficiency

of local polling stations and the IT system supporting the work of electoral commissions. In terms of elections to local executive offices (Presidents, Mayors) two candidates with the highest percentage of votes, will begin their campaign for the second round if none of them achieved above 50% of the eligible votes. This will also involve negotiations regarding the transfer of support by unsuccessful candidates.

In recent days the campaign became more aggressive. Previously PiS concentrated on presenting voters with their plans of infrastructural investments and social policies, which would be implemented in cooperation with the central government. PM Morawiecki spearheaded the party's campaign efforts and travelled across Poland rallying support. Similarly, Jarosław Kaczyński contributed to the party's campaign efforts. The last published campaign clip introduced the question of migrants to the campaign – PiS accuses the PO of trying to bring migrants, especially those from the Middle East and Africa, to Poland. This, according to party members, was planned from the beginning.

Polls published in the past weeks appear to be consistent, generally showing little fluctuation in voter preferences. In the elections to regional assemblies, the ruling PiS party expects to take approximately 34% of votes, the Civic Coalition (PO and Nowoczesna) 24%, unaffiliated local election candidates 12% and 8% each for the Democratic Left Alliance (SLD) and the agrarian PSL. Though good results are anticipated for the ruling party, they may fall short for PiS to gain a definite ruling majority following coalition talks. Only in the Subcarpathian voivodship, PiS is expected to rule independently, though, it may take over the Małopolskie and Podlasie regions and two others in an optimistic scenario.

Experts argue that PiS may want to negotiate an alliance with the SLD, which in recent polls seems to have increased its standing. PiS leader Jarosław Kaczyński recently said that the times of the Polish People's Republic – associated with many SLD party members – has passed, and if the party can adopt PiS' vision of local governments, there is area for cooperation. This proposal was, however, rejected by the SLD, which argues that Jarosław Kaczyński by implying coalition negotiations,

wants to increase the polarisation of the political scene by discouraging “anti-PiS” voters from smaller opposition parties. A polarised political scene in local governments would increase the chances for PiS to obtain majorities in regional assemblies and local councils. This is also consistent with the party’s strategy of weakening the agrarian PSL, which previously dominated in rural areas.

The Civic Coalition including the Civic Platform and Modern displayed a coherent and united front throughout the campaign. Commentators argued that this was not certain, as the two parties previously fell out on a number of occasions. Polls are clear that despite these efforts, the Civic Platform is unlikely to repeat its success from the past local elections and will cede some of its mandates to other competitors. If results prove that the alliance paid off, there is a high likelihood that it will be sustained for the upcoming European Parliament and parliamentary elections in 2019.

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.