

di Jukka Pietiläinen

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A combined meeting of the party council and parliamentary group of Left Alliance decided unanimously to participate in five party coalition government led by Social Democratic prime minister Antti Rinne on Wednesday evening 5 June. Government was nominated on Thursday 6 June. Before decision Left Alliance asked the opinion of the members if the party should participate in this coalition after the negotiations on government programme were finalised on 3 June. The voting took place by internet, and a possibility to vote in paper was organised in party district offices. The voting took place from Monday afternoon to Tuesday midnight and resulted a total of 97,2% of party members approving the participation in government, 0,3% voted blanc and 1,5% opposed the participation in government. Turnout was 33,7% out of 11,000 party members.

The formation of government started after parliamentary elections on 14 April with the chairperson of the largest party, SDP. After collecting answers from all parties in parliament SDP chairperson Antti Rinne made decision that five parties SDP, Centre, Greens, Left Alliance and Swedish People's Party could form a best coalition.

The Centre party had asked in opinion poll the opinion of party elite and local activists, if the party should start negotiations or remain in opposition after a huge loss of support and the worst result in elections in 100 years. Approximately 80% of around 300 activists approved the participation in coalition. Centre party which represents interests of countryside and Northern and Eastern regions has been one of the cornerstones of Finnish political system, but in 2019 it got only 13.8% of votes and 31 MPs (-18), and in Helsinki it lost even its only MP.

The right-wing Coalition party has believed that Centre party will remain in opposition and therefore they could present hard conditions for participation in SDP-led government. Also the Finns party, despite being second largest party in elections, remained in opposition.

The new government will have 19 ministers, seven from SDP, five from Centre, three from Greens and two from both Left Alliance and Swedish People's Party. 11 of ministers are women and 8 are men. Of important ministers SDP will get prime minister, but also Minister of Local Government and Ownership Steering and Minister of Transport and Communications. Greens got Ministers of Foreign Affairs and Interior, who will be the forthcoming party chairperson, a leftist green Maria Ohisalo, who has made PhD dissertation on poverty. Centre will get ministers of finance and economic affairs among others and the main Swedish People's party minister is Minister of Justice who is the party chairperson Anna-Maja Henriksson. The chairperson of the Centre party, Juha Sipilä, the former prime minister, announced that he will resign and new party chairperson will be elected in extraordinary party congress in September. Sipilä decided not stay in government and will not take even the position of Speaker of the parliament but will remain only as an ordinary MP.

Left Alliance got 2 out of 19 ministers, and the posts are the Minister of Social Services and Health and the Minister of Education (however, without science, e.g. universities). Last time when Left Alliance has been in government (2011-2014 and the ministers were Transport (without media) and Culture (including sport), which were less significant.