

Thursday, October 25, 2018

PiS acquires local patronage but regional elections have failed to provide a launch-pad for the 2019 parliamentaries

Ruling Law and Justice (PiS) gained in smaller towns but lost in big cities, official results from the October 21 regional elections showed today. Turnout (55%) was highest since 1999. PiS took most seats in the 16 regional assemblies — 254 out of 552, to 194 for the opposition Civic Platform (PO)-Nowoczesna coalition, and 70 for the agrarian Polish People's Party. In 2014, eleven months before PiS defeated PO in parliamentary polls, the respective seats were 171, 179 (PO standing alone) and 157. PiS won nine assemblies, taking more than half the seats in six. However, the opposition triumphed in mayoral contests in Warsaw, Lodz, Poznan and Wroclaw, PO candidate Rafal Trzaskowski scoring a first-round victory in Warsaw with 56.7%. Second rounds take place on November 4. PiS leader Jaroslaw Kaczynski attributes election success to Prime Minister Mateusz Morawiecki.

Our judgement

PiS will extend its control of regional assemblies from just one; they have significant spending powers. With parliamentary and presidential elections due in 2019-20, the result will disappoint Kaczynski; although PiS's local vote went up, it lost ground on 2015 and missed its 50% target. The result confirms a national divide, with big-city populations unimpressed by PiS's traditional stance. Morawiecki's position seems secure for now.