

## Poland's ruling PiS wins general election; Hungary's opposition clinches mayoral race

Written by Martin Banks on 14 October 2019 in News  
News

In an election hailed as the 'most important ballot' since 1989, Poland's ruling Law and Justice party (PiS) won 43.6 percent of the vote, according to exit polls.



Photo credit: Press Association

PiS, which has been in conflict with the EU over reforms to the judiciary as well as migration since coming to power in 2015, won Sunday's parliamentary election.

The main opposition party Civic Coalition, an umbrella group that includes the Civic Platform formerly led by European Union Council President Donald Tusk, took 27.4 percent.

According to a preliminary seat distribution in the 460-member lower house of parliament, PiS would take 239 seats - enough for an absolute majority.

---

## RELATED CONTENT

- [Poland's commissioner-designate ordered to pay back MEP expenses](#) [1]
  - [Frans Timmermans: No concrete measures from Poland to address EU concerns](#) [2]
  - [MEPs welcome EU decision to trigger article 7 procedure against Poland](#) [3]
  - [EU warns Poland over judicial reforms while also reaching out with call for dialogue](#) [4]
  - [European arrest warrant: ECJ ruling a 'stark warning' to Poland](#) [5]
- 

The outcome represents a major success for PiS but it still falls short of a landslide victory and paves the way for the continuation of PiS' single-party government, which has been in power since 2015.

In a preliminary seat distribution in the Sejm lower house of parliament, the Civic Coalition would get 130, the Left 43, the Polish Coalition 34 and Confederation 13 seats. The German minority has one seat.

Voter turnout surged to 61.1 percent, which, if confirmed, would be the highest in a parliamentary vote since a 1989 partially free election that ushered in the end of communist rule in Poland.

Some pundits say that PiS, with a renewed mandate, will be a strong player at EU level.

“This new tone of PiS is aimed at strengthening its position in the final round of the EU budgetary negotiations and, most importantly, discouraging the EU institutions and Member States from taking action on possible rule of law violations” **ECFR**

Reacting to the results on Monday, the international think tank European Council on Foreign Relations (ECFR), said the PiS is “trying to portray itself as part of the pro-European mainstream, following the failure of Eurosceptic parties in May’s EU elections.”

The ECFR spokesman added, “This new tone of PiS is aimed at strengthening its position in the final round of the EU budgetary negotiations and, most importantly, discouraging the EU institutions and Member States from taking action on possible rule of law violations.”

Further reaction came from Piotr Buras, head of ECFR’s Warsaw office and a leading expert on Polish and EU politics, who told this website, “Europe cannot prevent Poland’s or any other country’s backsliding towards semi-authoritarianism, nor can it ignore the disastrous implications of such a scenario.”

“However, if Brussels and other democratic capitals want to avoid a contamination of the EU system, they will have to apply the full range of its instruments to fend it off, including the infringement procedures against Poland, rule of law conditionality of EU funds and support for civil society.”

“Political arguments will be no less important - and, as in relations with other external non-democratic powers, they should be vocal that ‘semi-authoritarianism’ is a clear violation of what Europe stands for, even with a renewed democratic mandate.”

Pawel Zerka, policy fellow and senior coordinator on “European Power” at ECFR, added, “High levels of support for PiS should not be interpreted as a sign that Poles have become nationalist or

xenophobic. Rather, it reveals an effective party machine – and an ability of PiS to mobilise voters with policies based on direct social transfers.”

“The opposition sought to frame this election around democracy, the rule of law and values of openness and tolerance. However, the cut through seems to have been on national economic growth, social provision, and, ultimately, how well-off everyday Poles are feeling.”

“Orbán’s attempt to snuff out the opposition by keeping a stranglehold on the media and restricting public debate has not worked as well as he hoped. A new generation of internationally-minded young people have rejected a repressive, authoritarian vision of the future” **Reinhard Bütikofer MEP**

He added, “The opposition also paid the price of being divided into too many blocks – which, in turn, despite their collectively getting more votes than PiS, means they’ll have fewer seats in the Sejm”

Meanwhile, in Hungary the joint opposition candidate Gergely Karácsony has won Budapest’s mayoral election with over 50 percent of the vote, defeating the Fidesz-backed incumbent, István Tarlós.

The opposition will also have a majority in the city council. And it has won 10 out of the 23 most populous cities of Hungary, an increase of 8 since the previous election.

Reacting to these results, European Green Party co-chair Reinhard Bütikofer said, “Change is coming to Budapest following a resounding victory for the opposition candidate Gergely Karácsony in the mayoral elections.”

“We wish Karácsony every success in bringing about a just and sustainable vision in one of Europe’s most culturally-significant capitals.”

“Orbán’s attempt to snuff out the opposition by keeping a stranglehold on the media and restricting public debate has not worked as well as he hoped. A new generation of internationally-minded young people have rejected a repressive, authoritarian vision of the future and opted instead for progressive change.”

“We hope this is the shape of things to come in Hungary and in the east as we sit on the cusp of a new decade. Opposition leaders must use this opportunity to push back against repressive measures and lay the groundwork for a brighter, more just, greener and openly European future ahead.”

“Erdogan has lost Istanbul and now Orbán has lost Budapest. It is more than a dream – the fightback against illiberalism and state corruption is well underway in Hungary” **Guy Verhofstadt**

Hungarian Renew Europe (RE) MEP Anna Júlia Donáth said, “Today, we have demonstrated that Hungary is ready for change.”

Her RE colleague Katalin Cseh noted that the result represents a “huge setback” for Hungary’s controversial PM Viktor Orbán while RE group leader Dacian Ciolos tweeted, “Budapest has woken up to a new political order.”

Belgian MEP Guy Verhofstadt said, “Erdogan has lost Istanbul and now Orbán has lost Budapest. It is more than a dream – the fightback against illiberalism and state corruption is well underway in

Hungary.”

## About the author

Martin Banks is a senior reporter at The Parliament Magazine

## Tags

[Foreign Affairs](#) [6]

[Justice and Rights](#) [7]

## Categories

[International Relations](#) [8]

[Public order, justice and rights](#) [9]



## Site Sections

- [Home](#)
- [Content](#)
- [Policy](#)
- [Magazines](#)
- [PM+](#)
- [Thought Leader](#)
- [Climate Crisis](#)
- [Editorial Calendar](#)
- [Policy Events](#)
- [Event Coverage](#)
- [MEP Awards 2020](#)
- [Contact Us](#)

## Services

[Dods PeopleDods](#)  
[MonitoringDods](#)  
[ResearchDods](#)  
[EventsDods](#)  
[Training](#)

## Media & publishing titles

[Politics HomeThe](#)  
[HouseThe](#)  
[Parliament](#)  
[MagazineHolyrood](#)  
[Total PoliticsPublic](#)

[Affairs NewsCivil  
Service  
World](#)  
[PublicTechnology  
Training](#)  
[JournalDods](#)  
[Parliamentary](#)  
[CompanionVacher's  
Quarterly The](#)  
[European Union and  
Public Affairs  
Directory](#)

### **Dods events**

[Westminster](#)  
[BriefingDigital](#)  
[Health & Care](#)  
[ScotlandMEP](#)  
[AwardsThe Skills  
SummitScottish  
Public Service](#)  
[AwardsPublic Sector  
Procurement  
SummitPublic  
Sector ICT  
SummitCyber  
Security  
SummitCyber  
Security  
2017Training  
Journal Awards](#)

### **Partnership events**

[The Health and  
Care Innovation  
ExpoCivil Service  
LiveCivil Service  
AwardsChief  
Nursing Officer for  
England's  
SummitWomen into  
LeadershipThe  
Youth Justice  
ConventionSocitm  
Spring  
ConferenceNHSCC  
Annual Members'  
EventDods at Party](#)

**Source URL:** <https://www.theparliamentmagazine.eu/articles/news/poland%E2%80%99s-ruling-pis-wins-general-election-hungary%E2%80%99s-opposition-clinches-mayoral-race>

**Links**

- [1] <https://www.theparliamentmagazine.eu/articles/news/poland%E2%80%99s-commissioner-designate-ordered-pay-back-mep-expenses>
- [2] <https://www.theparliamentmagazine.eu/articles/news/frans-timmermans-no-concrete-measures-poland-address-eu-concerns>
- [3] <https://www.theparliamentmagazine.eu/articles/news/meps-welcome-eu-decision-trigger-article-7-procedure-against-poland>
- [4] <https://www.theparliamentmagazine.eu/articles/news/eu-warns-poland-over-judicial-reforms-while-also-reaching-out-call-dialogue>
- [5] <https://www.theparliamentmagazine.eu/articles/news/european-arrest-warrant-ecj-ruling-stark-warning-poland>
- [6] <https://www.theparliamentmagazine.eu/tags/foreign-affairs>
- [7] <https://www.theparliamentmagazine.eu/tags/justice-and-rights>
- [8] <https://www.theparliamentmagazine.eu/categories/international-relations>
- [9] <https://www.theparliamentmagazine.eu/categories/public-order-justice-and-rights>