

Outgoing President of the Republic Bronislaw Komorowski is the big favourite in the Presidential election in Poland.

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Analysis

On 10th May next the Poles will be going to ballot in the first round of the presidential election. If none of the 11 candidates running manages to win an absolute majority a second round will be organised two weeks later - on 24th May. The main opposition party, Law and Justice (PiS) criticised the dates chosen for the election – indeed the first round will take place two days after the commemoration of the 70th anniversary of the end of the Second World War (an international ceremony is being organised in Gdansk on 8th May together with outgoing head of State Bronislaw Komorowski (Civic Platform, PO)).

This presidential election is of special importance in view of the parliamentary elections that will take place in Poland in October next. The election campaign will start just after the appointment of the President of the Republic.

According to the polls outgoing head of State Bronislaw Komorowski is due to be elected for a second mandate in May. The most recent poll by IBRiS for the daily *Rzeczpospolita*, published on 30th March last credited him with 41% of the vote in the first round ahead of Andrzej Duda (Law and Justice, PiS), who is due to win 27% of the vote. The left-wing candidate Magdalena Ogorek, Janusz Korwin-Mikke (Coalition for the Restoration of Freedom and Hope in the Republic, KORWiN) and Adam Jarubas (People's Party PSL) are due to win 5% of the vote each. Around 11% of those interviewed said they had not yet chosen for whom they would vote.

11 people are officially running in the presidential election:

– Bronislaw Komorowski (Civic Platform, PO),

outgoing head of State;

- Andrzej Duda (Law and Justice, PiS), MEP;
- Magdalena Ogorek, supported by the Democratic Left Alliance (SLD), historian (specialist of the history of the Catholic Church), journalist and actress. She has also worked for various institutions including the Polish Central Bank;
- Janusz Palikot (Your Movement, TR), a liberal, anti-Church businessman elected MP during the last general election on 9th October 2011, a mandate from which he has since resigned;
- Adam Jarubas (People's Party, PSL), Vice-President and Governor (President of the Region) of the voivodeship of the Holy Cross;
- Janusz Korwin-Mikke (Coalition for the Restoration of Freedom and Hope, Koalicja Odnowy Rzeczypospolitej Wolność i Nadzieja, KORWiN), MEP and unfortunate candidate in the last presidential election on 20th June and 4th July 2010 as he ran for Freedom and Rule of Law (2.48% of the vote in the first round);
- Grzegorz Braun, writer, journalist and documentarian;
- Marian Kowalski (National Movement, RN)

nationalist candidate and eurosceptic;

- Pawel Tanajno (Direct Democracy, DB), businessman and former member of Civic Platform;
- Jacek Wilk (New Right Congress, KNP) lawyer;
- Pawel Kukiz, independent candidate, rock singer, actor and regional MP for Lower Silesia. He has condemned the similarity between the Civic Platform and Law and Justice. He wants to "return the State to the citizens."

BRONISLAW KOMOROWSKI AND A SECOND MANDATE

Outgoing President Bronislaw Komorowski announced that he was running again on 6th February last. He said that the satisfaction expressed by his fellow countrymen about his first mandate (70% of Poles say they are happy with the head of State's work) and the high level of confidence which he enjoys in the polls – even though some analysts believe he has been the most passive leader since 1989 – made him decide to stand again.

Bronislaw Komorowski has made security the focus of his electoral campaign. Former Defence Minister (2000-2001) he likes to maintain that the President of the Republic must have the competence and experience necessary to assume the management of the armed forces. *"A conflict is occurring on our eastern border, it is our responsibility to try and prevent a real civil war from breaking out and the head of State has a crucial role to play in this,"* he declared. He has promised to work in support of competitiveness and the fight to counter the demographic crisis experienced by Poland; he presented a programme focused on family policy, the development of rural areas, the right to work and taxation. He supports the rapid adoption of the single currency by Poland, which he deems to be a "strategic" move.

Left wing candidate Magdalena Ogorek also supports the euro whilst the main rival of the outgoing President Andrzej Duda, like his party, is still against it. In his opinion the zloty has

protected Poland from the economic crisis and the head of State must not *"be the one to give up the country's sovereignty by doing away with the national currency."* Andrzej Duda, who hopes that a debate over the single currency will be organised before the election on 10th May also said that if he wins Poland would not join the euro zone.

In Poland the Presidential office is designed for a personality who is both known and experienced. In the present context Bronislaw Komorowski is the only one to have the calibre of a Statesman. Many analysts believe that the outgoing head of State might be elected in the first round of voting which would boost his party just months before the general elections. The outgoing Head of State might however suffer slightly due to the electorate's weariness of Civic Platform, in office since 2007.

On 16th June 2014 the weekly newspaper *Wprost* published recordings revealing that there had been a deal in 2011 between the Home Affairs Minister of the time, Bartlomiej Sienkiewicz, and the President of the Polish Central Bank Marek Belka, in which the latter promised to support Donald Tusk's government's economic policy if the Prime Minister accepted to get rid of his Finance Minister Jacek Rostowski. Some days later *Wprost* published a further recording in which, in all likelihood, Foreign Minister Radoslaw Sikorski says to someone – probably the former Finance Minister Jacek Rostowski - that Warsaw's alliance with Washington *"was worth nothing, that it was damaging because it gave Poland a false sense of security."* These revelations caused a scandal in Poland and destabilised Donald Tusk's government which was subject to a vote of confidence that it finally won on 25th June, 237 votes in support against 203.

More recently the government, now led by Eva Kopacz, faced the discontent of a majority of Poles after the announcement on 8th January of a plan to restructure the coalmines and that four in

Silesia, the country's main coalmining area, would be closed. After a strike lasting several days, the unions and the government agreed that the State run mines would remain open. The government withdrew its plan on 17th January the day after its adoption by parliament. The mines employ 100,000 people.

THE OTHER CANDIDATES

On 11th November last the PiS leader, former Prime Minister (2006-2007) Jaroslaw Kaczynski, announced that he would not be standing again in the presidential election and called to support Andrzej Duda. The latter promised to be an active president and to work towards improving social dialogue. He has made the relinquishment of the retirement reform (which brings the retirement age up to 67) by Eva Kopacz's government the focus of his programme. He also accuses Bronislaw Komorowski of not contesting Eva Kopacz's government enough. *"The President of the Republic speaks of reconciliation, it is a shame that he has not sought it. He should for example have worked towards an agreement between the government and the miners or at least have played a role as the arbiter in the conflict,"* declared Andrzej Duda.

The result of the main opposition candidate on 10th May will mainly depend on that of the "small" candidates. Indeed if the latter manage to convince a great number of voters the PiS will be weakened just months before the general elections.

Magdalena Ogorek, who has no partisan affiliation, is standing for the Polish left. SLD Chairman Leszek Miller, sees in her *"a symbol of the political opening to a new generation."* Magdalena Ogorek wants to raise salaries and retirement pensions, achieve access to education for all, healthcare and housing, a reduction of taxes for the poorest, labour contracts and the end of unpaid internships for young people. She is asking for less red-tape for the self-employed. However she has not given details about how she will act to achieve these

goals no more than she has said how she intends to finance them. She also maintains that her country is not Russia's enemy and criticises the hostile attitude adopted by Eva Kopacz's government toward Moscow. She maintains that the SLD condemns Russia's attitude in Ukraine but that she wants Warsaw and Moscow to communicate. *"I would not be afraid of answering Vladimir Putin and I would pick up the phone if he called me. Russia is and will always be our neighbour,"* she indicated.

The left wing candidate, who is often mocked because of her name, which in Polish means "cucumber" reproaches outgoing President Bronislaw Komorowski because of the cost of his first mandate.

THE PRESIDENTIAL OFFICE IN POLAND

Mainly an honorary role the Polish Head of State is however an important figure. Elected for five years he has the right to veto, which the Diet, the lower chamber of Parliament, can only reject with a 3/5th majority, a vote that also has to be taken in the presence of at least half of the MPs. The President of the Republic can decide to hold a referendum on his own initiative, a procedure that is not used often due to the low turnout rates usually recorded in Poland during electoral consultations.

The Polish President is the head of the armed forces; he ratifies international agreements, appoints and dismisses ambassadors and finally can exercise clemency, meaning he can revoke the courts' decisions on appeal. In virtue of the Constitution he cannot undertake more than two consecutive mandates.

Any candidate running for the Presidential office must be aged at least 35. To stand for election he must collate 1000 signatures from voters which he presents to the Polish electoral commission. His bid can only be recorded after the deposit of 100,000 signatures on the part of the electorate.

Reminder of the Presidential election results 20th June and 4th July 2010 in Poland

Turnout : 54.94% (1st round) and 55.31% (2nd round)

Political parties	No. votes won (1st round)	% votes won (1st round)	No. votes won (2nd round)	% votes won (2nd round)
Bronislaw Komorowski (Civic Platform, PO)	6 981 319	41,54	8 933 887	53,01
Jaroslaw Kaczynski (Law and Justice, PiS)	6 128 255	36,46	7 919 134	46,99
Grzegorz Napieralski (Democratic Left Alliance, SLD)	2 299 870	13,68		
Janusz Korwin-Mikke (Freedom and Rule of Law)	416 898	2,48		
Waldemar Pawlak (People's Party, PSL)	294 273	1,75		
Andrzej Olechowski (Independent)	242 439	1,44		
Andrzej Lepper (Self Defence and the Republic, SO)	214 657	1,28		
Marek Jurek (Republic Right)	177 315	1,06		
Boguslaw Zietek (Worker's Party)	29 548	0,18		
Kornel Morawiecki (Combattant Solidarity)	21 596	0,13		

Source : Polish Electoral Commission (<http://prezydent2010.pkw.gov.pl/PZT1/EN/WYN/W/index.htm> et <http://prezydent2010.pkw.gov.pl/PZT/EN/WYN/W/index.htm>)

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