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Analysis

Egils Levits, candidate supported by the government coalition parties, should become the next President of the Republic of Latvia

On 29th May the 100 members of the Saeima, the only house in the Latvian parliament, will elect the successor to Raimonds Vejonis, as President of the Republic of Latvia. The outgoing head of State decided not to ask for a second mandate. Raimonds Vejonis said he was pleased with several of the achievements completed during his term in office, amongst which are the strengthening of State security, the establishment of Latvian as the only language used in education and the adoption of several reforms of the civil service.

On 14th May last, 34 people, members of Harmony (Saskana, S) and the Union of Greens and Farmers (ZZS) asked for a postponement of the presidential election date from 29th May to 5th June to offer Latvians more time to get to know the candidates – in the opinion of the chair of the ZZS Armands Krauze, and to enable the organisation of more debate between the latter. The presidential election must absolutely take place before 7th June.

The Candidates Running

3 persons are officially running in the presidential elections:

– Egils Levits, unfortunate candidate against Raimonds Vejonis in the last presidential election on 3rd June 2015. A judge at the European Court of Justice he has the support of the parties in the government coalition, which are the National Alliance (All for Latvia (VL) and the Homeland Union and Freedom (TB/LNNK)), the New Conservative Party (JKP), For the Development of Latvia (PAR), New Unity (JV) and To whom does the country belong? (Kam pieder valsts?) (KPV). Egils Levits hopes to set the country goals that it can achieve “solidarity, the feeling of belonging and the establishment of a modern State.” “The 2020’s must bet those of solidarity and social justice,” he declared.

– Juris Jansons, ombudsman, is supported by the

opposition, the Green and Farmers Union (ZZS). The candidate promotes his neutrality at a time when “many in society do not trust politicians.” He hopes, if he is elected head of State, to protect the weakest citizens and to reduce social inequality.

– Didzis Smits (KPV LV), MP, supported by a share of the members of his own party “To whom does the country belong?”

The election of the head of State in Latvia is a power game between the various parties who use this election to increase their influence over the political arena or in the government coalition that governs the country. Egils Levits is the main favourite. He is due to win the vote of 55 of the members of the Saeima on 29th May.

The Presidential Office

The head of the Latvian State is elected for a four-year mandate (renewable once), by the absolute majority of the 100 members of the Saeima. Traditionally the voting is secret, the election will be public this time. Indeed, amendments to the electoral law entered into force on 1st January 2019 introducing the principle of an open vote. Each MP will therefore be responsible for his vote in front of the electorate. This measure aims to strengthen citizens’ confidence in the parliamentary system by increasing transparency.

Presidential Election in Latvia

29th May 2019

The role of President of the Republic is accessible to every Latvian (who holds the nationality of no other country) and has to be aged at least 40. The candidates must declare their intentions at least 50 days prior to the election and 45 days before the end of the mandate of the head of State in office. If none of the candidates wins the vital 51 votes for the election after two rounds, a further vote is organised within the next two weeks after that. The candidates have 5 days to declare their intention. If again none of them wins an absolute majority, a new election is organised.

In Latvia, the President of the Republic represents the State in the world. He ratifies the international treaties, appoints the country's diplomatic representatives and accredits foreign diplomatic representatives. He is the

head of the armed forces, leads the national security council and has the right to call an amnesty.

The head of State can suggest laws as well as a referendum on the dissolution of the Saeima. If the majority of the voters approve, Parliament is dissolved and new general elections are organised in the two months after that. However, if more than half of the voters oppose the dissolution, the President of the Republic must resign from office and the Saeima elects his successor for the remaining length of time of the presidential mandate. On the request of at least half of the MPs, the head of State can be impeached by Parliament in a closed session if at least 2/3 of its members vote in this sense. In this case the Saeima immediately elects a new president of the Republic.

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