

**Dominik Szczepański**  
University of Rzeszów, Poland

## **EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT ELECTIONS IN POLAND IN 2014**

### ***Abstract:***

The aim of the article was to discuss the elections to the European Parliament in Poland in 2014, taking into consideration the political situation before the elections in particular. The influence of the parliamentary elections in 2011 on the Polish political scene, and the activity of governmental coalition of the Civic Platform and the Polish Peasant Party, as well as the emergence of new political entities actively participating in electoral competition, has been analysed.

A detailed analysis was done regarding the course of election campaign, paying attention to the elements of negative campaigning as well as the course of the elections themselves. The final reflections were dedicated to the election results and their influence (consequences) on the Polish party system.

### ***Key words:***

elections, European Parliament, Polish political scene, political competition, party system

### ***Introduction***

The European Parliament (EP) is one of its kind forum where it comes to both confrontation as well as cooperation of almost all major political forces in the European Union (EU). Despite the fact that at the beginning of its existence the PE had only consultation rights, now, after a series of institutional reforms it can, in some extent, influence decisions of the EU which have great importance for millions of European citizens [Domagała 2010: 11-13]. The PE elections are not, however, a European event *par excellence*. They take place in particular member states, they are held in local languages and are participated politicians known in a particular country, not in the whole EU. Additionally, they do not take place on the same day and according to the same electoral system

[Wiszniewski 2008: 131-141]. The PE election campaign is controlled by domestic political parties, the role of European issues is only symbolical and it revolves around those issues which concern domestic political affairs. The elections held in such a manner do not foster looking from the political perspective at problems of the EU as a whole, as well as European community integration.

As noticed by Jacek Kucharczyk and Melchior Szczepanik, „the elections, which are European only by their name, and are the most noticeable example of the weakness of the European Union as a political institution. There is a lack common political identity, which should be manifested by the European institutions. Until now no common political space has been created but there are 27 separate such spaces [since 1<sup>st</sup> July 2013 the number of member states is 28. Croatia, as the first Balkan state, has gained EU membership –D.S], which are connected only in a limited area. To put it in a nutshell –if a European **demos** [in bold as in the original – D.S] exists – it remains latent, not giving the ones ruling the EU clear directives concerning the future of Europe” [Kucharczyk, Szczepanik 2010: 7-8]. A partial solution in this matter was to prepare a Constitution Treaty, which did not improve the position of the PE. The improvement occurred on 1<sup>st</sup> of December 2009 with the legislation of the Lisbon Treaty, which enforced the role of the EP.

The enforcement in question concerned the two areas: material and institutional. Within the material dimension the enforcement of the EP role relied first and foremost on including the new areas into the so-called ordinary legislation procedure, the obligation for making most international agreements to be approved by the EP, as well as a series of changes in comitologic and budget procedures. The second dimension –the institutional one –has a significant role with regards to the elections perspective, as the changes introduced by the Lisbon treaty concerned the composition of the EP itself and the role of this institution in choosing the President of the Council of the European Union. Except this change, the Lisbon treaty gave the EU legal personality, it liquidated the European Community, abolished a system of three legal pillars and made reorganization of EU legal institutions. The citizens gained the laws of (indirect) initiative in legislating the new EU law [Barcz 2009: 6; Wojtaszczyk 2013: 183-187].

It should be mentioned that despite a series of the reforms made, the EP is first and foremost the EU institution which meets the conditions of enforcing democracy in EU. Since 1979 it is elected in direct elections by the total population of the member states, but despite this the elections to this institution do not arouse great interest of European citizens, which is indicated by low turnout. The elections in 2014 as well as two previous elections did not enjoy great public interest. In the first, historic EP elections in June 2014 the turnout amounted only 20,87% of the entitled to vote. Among the 25 countries lower turnout was

only in Slovakia (16,66%). In Poland it was accounted for not preparing the citizens for elections, lack of attractive election offer and poor information campaign. In 2009 during the next elections to EP the turnout among Poles was only slightly higher than in 2004 and amounted just 24,54% of the entitled to vote. At that time Poland was at the 25<sup>th</sup> place among 27 member states with regards to the turnout, ahead of Lithuania (24,54%) and Slovakia (19,63%).

The aim of the following analysis is to discuss the EP elections in Poland in 2014, considering the political situation in Poland before elections, the course of election campaign and elections themselves, as well as the results and their influence (consequences) and the Polish party system

### ***The political situation in Poland before elections***

The Polish political scene was shaped after the parliamentary elections held on 9<sup>th</sup> October 2011, which were won by the centre-right Civic Platform (Platforma Obywatelska –PO). The government, headed again by D. Tusk was entered by Polish Peoples Party (aka Polish Peasant Party – Polskie Sronnictwo Ludowe – PSL), a moderate pheasant party. In both governments PSL got 3 resorts; these included: Ministry of Economy, Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development, as well as Ministry of Labour and Social Policy. The newly elected parliament entered: PO, PiS (Law and Justice – Prawo i Sprawiedliwość), Palikot’s Movement that was later transformed into Your Movement (TR – Twój Ruch) and Democratic Left Alliance (SLD) as well as opposition parties.

The primary objective of PO-PSL coalition was to continue actions initiated in the Parliament of the 6<sup>th</sup> term of office (2007-2011). Announcing the action programme, D. Tusk pointed out to the necessity of providing the citizens with security and welfare, and as for the economy issues he announced „abandoning” in „2012 the procedure of excessive deficit and reaching at the end of the year about 3% PKB deficit of public finances sector, decrease of the public debt to the value of 52% of the GDP in 2012 with its systematic decrease to 47% in 2015” [Expose 2012: 2-3]. Besides that the Prime Minister also assured rationalising public administration by its „reduction” and making it more friendly and useful. Another point was the reform of KRUS (Agricultural Social Insurance Fund) relying on the change in a system for collecting health contribution from farmers, as well as the change in granting family allowances and child relief.

Important actions undertaken by the government were rising the pension contribution by 2% on the side of the employers; introducing changes in the valorization amount of pensions and annuities and rising retirement age for men and women to 67. Tax advantage for copyright work contracts was reduced, internet and bank deposit allowances were abolished, which enabled

to avoid capital gains tax (the so-called Belka tax); the expenditures for army remained at the same level (1,95% of GDP) and the basic salary for uniformed services workers was risen in 2012 by 300 PLN.

It is noteworthy that since the beginning of the parliamentary elections PO has maintained high support despite decreasing trust to government, which indicates „consolidation of anxiety against the possibility of the returning PiS (Law and Justice) and the conviction that PO is an alternative for that” [Fuksiewicz, Szczepanik 2009: 15]. In April 2014, when one of the most crucial issues was war in Ukraine, and the annexation of Crimea by the Russian Federation, the government of D. Tusk was supported by every fourth person interviewed (25%) by CBOS (Centrum Badania Opini Społecznej - Centre for Public Opinion Research); against the government were 43% of the interviewed, and indifference for PO-PSL coalition was declared by 29% of the people interviewed. This attitude towards D. Tusk cabinet was mostly influenced by the size of the place of residence, socio-economic status, or interviewed views and ideas. The negative scores of the government concerned only the area of economy, where 66% of the interviewed marked government activities in these areas as bad. The prime minister was rated well by young people with higher education and by people who evaluated their economic condition as good. The definite opponents were young people in the age between 18 and 24. Disapproval was expressed by PiS –supporters with un-defined party preferences [BS/49/2014].

In the period preceding the EP elections there occurred several transformations on the Polish political scene. As a result of a split in PiS, 15 members of parliament and 1 senator of this party founded on 7<sup>th</sup> November 2011 United Poland Parliamentary Club, which leader became A. Mularczyk. Then an initiative was undertaken within the party to form a political party now listed as Zbigniew Ziobro United Poland (Solidarna Polska Zbigniewa Ziobro – SPZZ), which occurred on 24<sup>th</sup> March 2014. Its leaders are Z. Ziobro (the leader), B. Kempa (vice-leader) and T. Cymański, A. Dera, M. Golba, P. Jaki, J. Rojek, M. Wójcik, J. Ziobro, K. Ziobro or J. Żaczek (members). In 2012 the party listed about 5 thousand members.

Palikot Movement, a liberal left-wing political party, which in 2011 elections introduced 40 MPs, transformed into Your Movement (Twój Ruch) grouping, associating except for Palikot Movement members also some of the members of Europa Plus Social Movement (aka Europa Plus), some of the leaders from the Polish Labour Party –August 80 (PPP- August 80), a group of activists of Social Democracy of Poland (SDPL) and Reason Party (Racja PL). The foundation of the previously mentioned Europa Plus association should also be mentioned. The initiator of its foundation was Member of the European Parliament from SLD party, M. Siwiec, who after leaving the party in 2012 set cooperation with J. Palikot.

Europa Plus was founded in 2013 and a month later a common programme by the participation of Palikot Movement, SDPL, Labour Union, the Reason Party and the Left Union (UL – Unia Lewicy) was compiled. The face of this project became A. Kwaśniewski, who together with J. Palikot and M. Siwiec announced the formation of the new centre-left association. SLD (Democratic Left Alliance) refused to involve in cooperation for this undertaking and made electoral registers together with UP. In May and June 2013 Europa Plus was joined by the new political parties: the Democratic Party (Stronnictwo Demokratyczne – SD), PPS- August 80 and the Democratic Party demokraci.pl. UP eventually resigned from participating in the project. The association was headed by M. Siwiec, A. Kwaśniewski and J. Palikot, and the vice leaders became K. Iszkowski and R. Kwiatkowski. The coalition ended up on 26<sup>th</sup> May 2014.

The final example of shaping Polish political scene was founding, on 7<sup>th</sup> December 2013, the centre-right political party with conservative incline – Jarosław Gowin’s Poland Together (PRJG – Polska Razem Jarosława Gowina). The make-up of the new formation, founded by a former PO politician, J. Gowin, included members of the Poland Comes First party (P. Kowal – the leader), the ‘Republicans’ association (headed by P. Wipler, who quite soon left the party together with his association members), as well as a part of former PO politicians. PRJR was soon joined by Conservative People’s Party (Stronnictwo Konserwatywno-Ludowe) under the leadership of M. Zagórski. The party authorities included J. Gowin (the leader) P. Dardziński, K. Iglicka-Okólska, M. Zagórski and P. Zając (vice-leaders). The leader of the national council became P. Kowal. Currently, the party enlists about 4,5 – 5 thousand members.

The additional background for all the events connected with the EP election campaign was the previously mentioned military conflict in Ukraine preceded by a series of protests and manifestations that began in November 2013 as a result of postponing by the Ukrainian President, W. Janukowycz, the decision about signing association agreement with the EU. This led, eventually, to the removal of the president from his office and then his fleeing from the country. The numerous protests and manifestations were being brutally suppressed and the participants demanded signing the association agreement with the EU. In January and February 2014 the separatists began a military uprising against the newly elected Ukrainian authorities and declared the formation of self-proclaimed Donetsk People’s Republic and Lugansk People’s republic, supported by the Russian Federation. Together with seizure of Donbas key cities the separatists proclaimed in May 2014 the Russian Federation of Novorossiia. The only actions undertaken against the growing conflict by the international community was providing Ukrainians with support, as well as laying embargos on Russia by the European Union. Poland actively involved

in the situation in Ukraine. Its main purpose was first and foremost providing material support, especially blankets, medicines and medical equipment. These actions positively influenced the scores of D. Tusk government [BS/49/2014].

### *The election campaign*

According to the electoral law in force Poland has been divided into 13 election districts, which by no means do not overlap the Voivodships (provinces) borders, by the method of their connection „with varied population, from 2 mln in Subcarpathian area to almost 5 mln in Silesia [...] indicates how significant is the influence of current situation of political parties in support ranking on the current solutions with regards to electoral laws” [Glajcar 2010: 59]. Such electoral law legislated by the government of Leszek Miller does not meet the formal requirement of equality, as some regions are overrepresented and some underrepresented. The table 1 shows areas of electoral districts to the EP in Poland.

The main axis of Polish politics before PE elections in 2014 was the conflict between PO and PiS, especially criticism of D. Tusk actions; the other parties (PSL, SLD-UP, SPZZ, PRJG, Congress of the New Right or Self-Defense) were only a background of the conflict, sustaining the polarization during the electoral campaign.

Table 1. Areas of electoral districts to the European parliament in Poland

Number of the electoral district	Area of the electoral district and the headquarter of the election committee
1	Pomearian Voivodship – Gdańsk
2	Kuyavian-Pomearian Voivodshi – Bydgoszcz
2	Podlaskie and Warmian-Masurian voivodship – Olsztyn
4	Warsaw and 8 countries of the Masovian voivodship (grodziski, legionowski, nowodworski, otwocki, piaseczyński, pruszkowski, warszawski zachodni oraz wołomiński) – Warszawa
5	4 urban districts (Płock, Radom, Ostrołęka i Siedlce) and 29 countries of the Masovian voivodship – Warsaw
6	Łódź voivodship – Łódź
7	Greater Poland voivodship – Poznań
8	Lublin voivodship – Lublin
9	Subcarpathian voivodship – Rzeszów
10	Lesser Poland and Świętokrzyskie voivodships – Kraków
11	Silesian voivodship – Katowice
12	Lower Silesian and Opole voivodships – Wrocław
13	Lubusz and West Pomearian voivodships – Gorzów Wielkopolski

Source: self study on the basis of: *Ordynacja wyborcza do Parlamentu Europejskiego, Dz.U. 2004 nr 25 poz. 219. z późn. zm.*

The domestic campaign did not by any means encourage to voting. There were neither educational aspects nor factual discussions. The basic tool, which was used most often, were election spots shown in TV and in internet. The topics of the campaign concerned almost exclusively domestic issues and they revolved around previously mentioned conflict between PO and PiS and concentrated on the achievements of the current coalition with regards to internal policy. The criticism concerned mainly the Prime Minister, not fulfilling the electoral promises from 2011, inefficiency and caring about self-interest of PO and PSL members, or too moderate approach towards the Ukrainian crisis.

The beginning of the election campaign was dominated by the approval and public announcement of the candidates to run for office from the first places at electoral registers to EP. This phenomenon concerned almost all election committees and lasted till 2<sup>nd</sup> February 2014. Europa Plus and Your Movement announced their candidates as the first committee. The lists included, among others, K. Szczuka, R. Kalisz, W. Nowicka, A. Celiński, M. Siwiec, J. Hartman or K. Kutz. Presenting famous and popular in left-wing circles people was aimed at drawing not only Your Movement electorate, but also SLD-UP (rival parties), feminists, and young people weary of the division into PO supporters and PiS antagonists.

PO, PiS, PSL, SLD-UP, SPZZ and PRJG put their trust in well known and prominent politicians coming from their own political formations; these included, among others: J. Buzek, J. Lewandowski, E. Łukacijewska, B. Kudrycka, D. Hübner (PO); A. Fotyga, K. Karski, Z. Krasnodębski, M. Piotrowski, R. Czarnecki (PiS); E. Kłopotek, S. Żelichowski, J. Kalinowski, W. Kosiniak-Kamysz, J. Fedak (PSL), L. Pastusiak, J. Zemke, T. Iwiński, W. Olejniczak, A. Kalata (SLD-UP); L. Dorn, M. Golba, Z. Ziobro, T. Adamek, B. Kempa (SPZZ); J. Żalek, P. Kowal, J. Godson, D. Lipiński, K. Jaworski (PRJG). Except for the previously mentioned formations the parties that took part in elections included also National Movement, J. Korwin-Mikke's Congress of the New Right, Self-defence, Greens Party and Direct Democracy [PKW data from 2014].

A significant role in the creation of domestic campaign played previously mentioned election spots, among which the ones of Your Movement and PiS included definitely the greatest amount of negative views. The aim was to discredit political rivals. Your Movement began to broadcast spots connected with criticising PiS and warning Poles before return of the party to power, which was referred to as „political hogs”. PiS, on the other hand, concentrated on presenting scandals made by the drunk J. Protasiewicz (PO) at the airport in Frankfurt, criticising J. Rostowski (the former minister in the PO-PSL government who „got Poland into debts more than Gierek, rose taxes and

retirement age”), M. Boni (reducing freedom of the information transfer in internet) and M. Kamiński (the former PiS spin doctor, listed at the first place of electoral register in Lublin, who was presented as the greatest lazybones in the EP).

The electoral spots of PO and PSL were of milder tone. The faces of PO were J. Buzek, J. Lewandowski, R. Sikorski and D. Tusk, and, what is important, the spots omitted the aspect of competition with PiS. The focus was only on encouraging the voters to vote for PO and on the attempt to convince the society about the possibility of conducting difficult negotiations about the new EU budget which would be beneficial for Poland. PSL on the other hand concentrated on the future and on things that connect Poles, namely house, street and people we meet on our way. These values were supported by the main objectives from the programme: tradition, modernity and Poland. The other parties strongly referred in their spots to the political rivals, indicating the things differing them from the present political class [Grochal, Kondzińska 2014: 3].

The key issue discussed in the campaign was the healthcare. The debate in this field was organised by PiS. In the last moment D. Tusk resigned from participation which met with immediate reaction of J. Kaczyński who described the Prime Minister as „coward”. Representatives of other groups, especially D. Gardias, a nurse who was on the first place of the electoral list of Your Movement, W. Elsner (YM), or T. Latos (the head of the parliamentary committee for healthcare from PiS) had not been invited to the debate. The debate showed clearly that PiS, which demanded increasing funds for healthcare, was not able to indicate the source of financing [Nowakowska 2014: 5].

Another point which should be mentioned is the lack of any debate concerning economic issues. Almost all the committees presenting electoral programmes and spots avoided referring to the economic issues. The reason for this was, supposing, cautious attitude towards introducing Euro currency in Poland. The leader of PRJG party, J. Gowin called upon the Prime Minister D. Tusk to present the plans of government in this area. The leader of PiS, J. Kaczyński advocated the idea to organise referendum before accepting the new currency. In other words, the economic issues, that appeared frequently in previous campaigns, did not meet with interest among EP candidates.

An evident element of the campaign was previously mentioned affair in Ukraine. The debate in this matter was organised in Hybryda student club in Warsaw. The leaders of Greens, PRJG, SPZZ, National Movement, SLD, PO and PiS. The most discussion revolved around the issue of Polish foreign policy and how effectively stop actions of V. Putin and was completely dominated by PiS and PO politicians who accused the other leaders of no action and submissiveness towards Russia.

It should be noted that lack of factual discussions and political debates participated by the leaders of electoral registers, which was noticeable during the EP campaign in 2014, was transferred into electronic media. It was by the means of political parties internet websites or blogs of particular candidates and politicians running for an EP office, or social networks such as Facebook, Twitter, Nasza Klasa, Youtube, Flickr or Pinterest, that most materials reflecting the attempt to win the support of voters was presented. These materials were exclusively dedicated to EP elections.

A relatively new approach towards making campaign turned out to be actions initiated by J. Korwin-Mikke, the leader of the New Right, who publicly stated that his participation in elections was dictated by the attempt to ridicule and show the whole „evil” of the EU from the inside. He also added that in case of winning an office his MPs will use all the privileges of the EU in order to „overthrow the system”. The electoral programme of this group was radical, which was reflected, among others, by the slogan „we are not going to fight with poverty, but we are not going to prevent the poor ones to get richer”. It should also be mentioned that on the electoral lists of the New Right there were no prominent politicians of this party, but only the local activists. The only exception was J. Korwin-Mikke himself, who ran for an office in Silesia. During the period preceding the EP elections the party gained from several to over a dozen thousand supporters on Facebook page alone, only because it was heavily reported and because its leaders were in the media. When answering the question whether it could be planned in advance, Mikołaj Cześniak, the head of the Social Sciences Institute at the University of Social Sciences and Humanities stated that „perhaps J. Korwin-Mikke has clever advisors, who decided that it would be best to show him when he is in his elements, when he seems great, authentic and reliable in what he is saying” [Kublik 2014: 5]. The New Right campaign was, in his opinion efficient, mainly because of the frankness and truthfulness of the opinions presented.

When it comes to political conflicts that became evident during the campaign it should be noted that they concerned more the party divisions than personal issues. The previously mentioned conflict between PO and PiS feuded since 2005 should be mentioned here, as well as electoral spots of Your Movement, in which PiS was being attacked directly and the society was warned against the return of this party to power. Except that one could notice conflicts between Europa Plus Your Movement and SLD-UP, where the SLD leader, L. Miller criticised directly A. Kwaśniewski who supported with his own name the coalition. A dispute was also caused by the transfer of the previously expelled SLD politician, R. Kalisz, who supported the Europa Plus Your Movement coalition.

Most conflicts could have been seen in PiS alone and they concerned the candidates supported by the Toruń community connected with father confessor

T. Rydzyk. The dispute, which divided PiS voters, revolved around the demands made by Rydzyk to place on PiS electoral lists people connected with the Toruń broadcasting agency<sup>1</sup>. The conflict grew stronger to such an extent that the party leader had to ‘anoint’ the electoral lists leaders himself and to indicate who should be voted. Such a situation occurred in several Polish cities, especially in Lublin (W. Paruch, a political scientist, the leader of PiS electoral list competed with M. Piotrowski), in Rzeszów (the EP member, T. Poręba, compete with his party colleague S. Ożóg) and in Łódź (where the TV Trwam protégée, U. Krupa was in the 3<sup>rd</sup> place on the list), or Kuyavian-Pomerian district, the „den” of the Toruń broadcasting institution (where instead of A. Jaworski PiS chose A. Zybortowicz) [Kondzińska 2014: 4]. Eventually, the head of the Toruń radio station announced the split with PiS and the cessation of further cooperation; this concerned also visiting Radio Maryja and Trwam TV by the politicians of PiS who remained loyal to the leader.

## ***Election***

A couple of days before the vote, the electoral committees of the two largest rival political parties, Civic Platform and Law and Justice, were carefully analysing the election polls from the last few days, which clearly showed that the difference between the parties will be only 2-3%.

Table 2. Poll results showing support for the parties/committees

<b>Date of polling</b>	<b>PO</b>	<b>PiS</b>	<b>E+ TR</b>	<b>PSL</b>	<b>SLD-UP</b>	<b>SPZZ</b>	<b>PRJG</b>	<b>KNP</b>	<b>RN</b>
April 30 <sup>th</sup>	29%	21%	2%	4%	6%	1%	4%	6%	0%
May 14 <sup>th</sup>	21%	20%	2%	3%	6%	2%	1%	6%	–
May 20 <sup>th</sup>	26%	21%	2%	5%	8%	1%	2%	4%	0%

Source: Own elaboration based on CBOS polls. (Centre for Public Opinion Research)

As Table 2 shows, the greatest disparities between PO and PiS were visible on April 30<sup>th</sup> and May 20<sup>th</sup>, where the advantage of PO over PiS was in turn 8 and 5%. Other election committees, with the exception of PSL and SLD-UP, were below the electoral threshold of 5%. It was also surprising that a few days before the election, public support had decreased for almost the majority of the parties supporting the polarity during the election campaign.

According to surveys carried out by OBOP, the elections to EP did not enjoy excessive interest among the public. A discernible decline in their importance was much greater than in relation to the elections of 2009 and was

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<sup>1</sup> Radio Maryja - religious and political socially conservative Polish radio station. The Radio Maryja Family is a religious movement led by Rydzyk

explained by not only their specificity, but also as a result of a more general trend, namely „a generally decreasing sense of meaning and importance of any elections to representative institutions” [BS/24/2014].

Table 3. A comparison of the results of the elections to the European Parliament in 2014 and 2009

Party/committee	2014			2009		
	Seats	Number of votes	Number of votes %	Seats	Number of votes	Number of votes %
Civic Platform	19	2 271 215	32,13	25	3 271 852	44,43
Law and Justice	19	2 246 870	31,78	15	2 017 607	27,40
Democratic Left Alliance – Labor Union	5	667 319	9,44	7	908 765	12,34
New Right of Janusz Korwin-Mikke	4	505 586	7,15	-	-	-
Polish People’s Party	4	480 846	6,80	3	516 146	7,0
United Poland of Zbigniew Ziobro	0	281 079	3,98	-	-	-
Europa Plus Social Movement	0	252 699	3,58	-	-	-
Poland Together of Jarosław Gowin	0	223 733	3,16	-	-	-
National Movement	0	98 626	1,40	-	-	-
Green Party	0	22 481	0,32	-	-	-
Direct Democracy	0	16 222	0,23	-	-	-
Self-Defence	0	2729	0,04	-	-	-

Source: Own elaboration based on the results of PKW (National Electoral Commission).

It is worth noting that the sense of political alienation phenomenon present in society as well as boredom by the Polish political scene, critical assessment of politicians, the quality of the entire class and political elite, did not help improve the quality of democracy at all and, what is more, did not contribute to the improvement of the voter turnout in the vote.

On the day of the election, that is May 24<sup>th</sup> 2014, the committees were receiving information about the voter turnout and the anticipated outcome of the election. Fractional data indicated that the difference between PO and PiS was small [Wroński 2014: 2]. Additionally, tension grew when TV first released the news about the victory of PO. On the next day, the victory shifted in favour of PiS who defeated PO by winning 21 seats, which is one seat more than PO. The National Electoral Commission presented the results of the election only after 24 hours from the moment all polling stations closed, and in accordance with them, announced the victory of PO over PiS by 0.35% [Czuchnowski, Górecki 2014: 3]. Detailed results of the election are summarised in Table 3.

Other election committees, especially SLD-UP and PSL, despite the expected crossing of the threshold visible in the polls, won respectively 5 and 4 seats to the EP, which means they were not able to either maintain or increase the number of MEPs when compared with the year 2009. The real surprise of the election was, first of all, crossing the electoral threshold and second, winning as much as 4 seats by KNP. Similar electoral success was noted by the environment centred around J. Korwin-Mikke in elections in 1991, when 3 candidates from the list of Real Politics Union entered the lower house of the Polish parliament. The remaining committees did not cross the required 5% of the electoral threshold.

### *The impact of the results of the elections to the European Parliament on the Polish party system*

It is worth noting that the results of the elections to the European Parliament have significantly influenced the evolution of the Polish party system. First, they once again confirmed the bipolarity of the system and highlighted even more the scale of divisions and mutual rivalry between PO and PiS. Despite the victory of PO who won by 0.35%, both parties received the same number of seats that is 19. So, it was just apparent victory. Second, the parties and committees who were previously referred to as the ones skilfully maintaining the polarity during the election campaign showed that in the process of political rivalry such things as mediality and motivating their own electorate play a significant role. This state of affairs led to the situation when despite the reluctance of people and weariness by both politics and politicians, the elections to the EP showed that in Poland we are dealing with a variety of political forces able to cross the electoral threshold.

The third important aspect related to the influence of the elections to the EP on the Polish party system was the initiation of the integration processes on the right and on the left. The first to take the initiative was J. Kaczyński who said that before the general election in 2015 it would have been necessary to unite the right wing who „wanted realistic changes”. The talks concerned only three parties PiS, PRJG and SPZZ and ended with signing an agreement on 19<sup>th</sup> July 2014. It was specified in the document that a strong alternative to „the disgraced government of PO and Polish People’s Party who are hurting Poland” must be created [Agreement 2014: 1]. In fact, what they did can be partly called „the cleaning up” of the political scene because when PiS united the right wing, they actually meant taking over the electorate of the parties they became involved in.

In the face of the established agreement on the right wing, the politicians belonging to SLD and TR expressed their willingness to form a similar

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initiative for the sake of the local elections in 2014 and the parliamentary elections in 2015. In the long term, they did not create a direct cooperation and the negotiations did not bring the expected results.

The fourth important result of the elections to the EP was showing the weakness of the domestic political parties, especially PRJG, SPZZ, National Movement, Self-Defence, Europa Plus Your Movement committee and Green Party. The cause of their weakness could be appealing to a similar electorate, lack of attractive political programme as well as inability to reach a broader electorate than their own. What could also lead to their failure was for sure limited financial resources which prevented them from organising a professional campaign and, as a result, getting better results in the election.

### *Summary*

To sum up, it should be noted that of all the national direct elections that the citizens of the Republic of Poland participate in, that is presidential, parliamentary and local elections, the elections to the European Parliament are considered to be least important, which can be seen in the low voter turnout. From the point of view of the actions taken by the national electoral committees of political parties, it is still hard to adequately encourage people to take an active part in and make a conscious choice during Euroelection.

Despite the relatively low turnout, the elections to the European Parliament in 2014 were of special interest to those groups of voters who chose their favourite politicians to represent the interests of Poland in Brussels, among them the members of PO and PiS (19 seats each), SLD-UP (5 seats) and PSL and KNP (4 seats each). In the case of the last formation, we could observe a kind of „a phenomenon” comparable with the results obtained by Freedom Union in the elections to the EP in 2004 – a party who after the period of governance was put aside the mainstream of social life. Its appearance in the European Parliament, as in the case of KNP, could be thought of as, on one hand, the opportunity to show their political platform to a larger group of people and, on the other hand, it can lead in a short spectrum of time to the alienation from the political life. This can be seen in the forthcoming local and parliamentary elections which are a test of political maturity.

An additional aspect connected with the elections to the EP was the actions taken by the right wing and led by J. Kaczyński to unite itself as well as the talks about unification undertaken on the left. For committees who won mandates to the EP, those elections were, for sure, on one hand, a confirmation of their effectiveness in influencing the voters, and on the other hand, a forecast before the next national elections that is the local and parliamentary elections.

In this respect, the national committees of political parties can make estimates on how possible it is to form their own mandates of trust and decide if they had better form ad hoc coalitions. The forthcoming elections will be the best example of that.

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