Analyses OSW

CENTRE FOR EASTERN STUDIES 7.09.2011 www.osw.waw.pl

The results of the elections in Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania will deepen the ruling coalition's problems

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The elections to parliament in the eastern German state of Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania – the sixth elections to German Bundeslands' parliaments in 2011 – were held on 4 September. The SPD won the largest number of votes (35.7%), gaining 5.5 percentage points more than in the previous elections. The CDU came second with 23.1% of the vote, 5.7 percentage points less than in 2006. The Left Party obtained 18.4% of the vote, which represents an increase 1.6 percentage points. The Green Party won 8.4% and entered the state parliament for the first time since the state was created, whereas the FPD, the CDU's coalition partner at the federal level, did not cross the electoral threshold as it gained only 2.7%. This setback for the Liberals (in 2006 they won 9.6%) is compounded by the fact that for the fourth time in 2011 they have not succeeded in securing seats in state parliaments. As for the nationalist NPD (6%), its representatives will again have seats in the *Landtag*. However, support for the party has decreased since the last elections.

Comment

- The victory of the Social Democrats means that the popular politician Erwin Sellering will be reappointed as prime minister and he will probably opt for the continued coalition with the Christian Democrats despite the fact that the SPD has also announced coalition talks with the Left Party. The fact that the Grand Coalition government enjoys voter confidence (47% of the citizens of Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania declare themselves satisfied with its work) and the successful solving of the state's largest problems (unemployment, heavy debt and depopulation) constitute a strong argument in favour of the continuation of the SPD-CDU government.

- The elections in Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania have further confirmed the process, observed at the federal level, of a strengthening of the SDP and the Green Party at the expense of the Christian Democrats and Liberals. The decline in the support for the CDU stems to a large extent from internal divisions in the party in Berlin over such issues as European and energy policies. The situation in the federal government will also be affected by the weakness of the coalition potential of the Liberals. The FDP, which has been poised over the electoral threshold for many months, cannot handle the establishment of a new direction under the party's changed leadership. Furthermore, the former FDP leader – the present foreign minister Guido Westerwelle and the policy

pursued by him are being severely criticised by both FPD members and politicians from other parties.

- This latest defeat sustained by the FDP this year at the local level, which may be repeated in the Berlin state elections scheduled for 18 September, may lead to the radicalisation of the Liberals' political line in the federal government. For Chancellor Merkel this would mean a less predictable coalition partner and difficulty in establishing a common position in such important issues as the eurozone crisis (the FDP is reluctant to allocate further funds for rescuing the countries on the verge of bankruptcy).