



# What political parties want to change in Poland and how?

Dossier for the 2023 parliamentary elections

The level of public debate and the quality of the election campaign that we are witnessing up close, and perhaps above all the historical moment in which Poland has found itself, are not conducive to a substantive conversation about the future, expressed in written programmes, promises and legislation.

The Manichean vision of reality, the endless discussion of polarisation and depolarisation, and, finally, the sense that the period of political transition was coming to an end, meant that this campaign was governed by the past, not the future. Politicians and voters were assessing past governments, pointing out mistakes, accusing each other of shortcomings, digging into the dirt and looking for sins. There was little room or willingness to ask what comes next. First we have to win and then we will think about it - this is a maxim that everyone involved in this campaign would subscribe to.

This phenomenon is not just Polish. The historical moment is changing, and with it the essence of politics is changing. We live in times of permanent crises and ad hoc solutions. The times of grand strategies and their implementations are gone and may not return. It is important to have a plan. But it is more important to be able to modify it, to deviate from it, to adapt it. The general opinion is that one should govern well, not plan long and hard.

This campaign and these policies are a testament to our times. A time of flashing screens, of dozens of characters rather than hundreds of pages, a time of funny retorts and wry remarks rather than deep thoughts or clever solutions. Entertainment wins out over information, news cycles end before they have begun, commentators strain to make a clever comment on something before the subject changes.

Of course, one can wring one's hands and wail over the fate of democracy, Poland and the world. We chose a different solution. We have collected programme declarations as diligently as possible, we have read the specifics, we have followed the „substantive” statements. We do not delude ourselves that the material you are about to read will tell the future. That a politician of the winning formation will map out the next term with an election programme in hand and on his lips.

But we believe that what emerges from these texts is a vision of the policies that the people whom Poles will elect in a few days will want to implement. That the programme choices and particular solutions will be reflected in future governments. That is why it is worth reading these programme analyses, preserving them and returning to them to assess what has been successfully implemented, why and for what purpose. I invite you to take a look.

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# What's in the parties' election programmes



## DEFENCE

military spending  
weapon purchases  
size of armed forces  
military pensions  
protection of the uniform  
access to weapons  
structure of the army  
civil protection

PiS has announced that it will maintain the course adopted two years ago to build a much larger and stronger army. The opposition does not question the fundamental directions of strengthening the country's defence.

**PiS wants to maintain a high level of military spending and expand the army.** In its election programme, the ruling party has declared that “a modern, well-equipped, powerful army is the most important guarantee of the sovereignty of the Republic of Poland and the foundation of its independence”. It has also pledged to maintain the level 4-4.5 per cent of GDP in defence spending until 2031. PiS also upholds its ambition to create an army of 300,000 soldiers (currently, according to the Ministry of Defence, there are 180,000), with six land force divisions and a corps command “based on the US model”, tiered air defence and powerful artillery. PiS wants to create reserve divisions based on military universities, popularise military training in various forms and reestablish the Military Medical Academy.

**KO has announced that PiS will be held accountable and its victims will be compensated.** As part of “100 policies for 100 days”, the party presented seven proposals in the block devoted to national defence issues, one of which discussed controlling the activities of the Ministry of Interior. The main opposition force has said that all soldiers unjustly dismissed after 2015 will be given an opportunity to return to military service, and those retired from the military will have their rights restored. The Ministry of Defence will carry out an audit of promotions and defence orders and issue a regulation to “protect those in uniform” from being used by political parties. The armament demands concern the preparation of a new modernisation plan (air defence, helicopters, drones) and joining the European Sky Shield Initiative.

**Trzecia Droga wants to reorganise and depoliticise the army.** According to Szymon Hołownia, the party's defence programme was created by experts and experienced former military personnel, including Mirosław Róžański, who is running for the Senate. At the “We take safety seriously!” conference, Hołownia condemned the “use of soldiers by PiS for party purposes”. The leader of Trzecia Droga has proposed changes in the promotion system and instead of the Ministry of Defence, he would like to subordinate territorial defence forces (WOT) to the command of branches of armed forces. He also seeks to increase combat potential by creating battalion and division-level subunits that would fill the country's division-level defence system.

Air defence units would be transformed into brigades that protect not only troop concentrations but also critical civilian infrastructure. Hołownia's coalition partners from PSL would like 50 per cent of equipment used by the armed forces to be produced in Poland.

**Lewica focuses on protecting civilians and controlling the services.** The party presented general defence goals: modernising weapons, maintaining a professional army (without forced conscription) and an audit of armaments programmes. Poland's defence will be complemented by "European armed forces" - although it failed to provide any specifics in this regard. It has called for the introduction of a "Nordic style of comprehensive defence", which includes the construction of civil protection infrastructure - shelters, water intakes, and medicine warehouses. A detailed programme was presented by Razem, which proposes to create a Polish Defence Doctrine, which would be used to strategically communicate to Poland's adversaries the consequences of their hostile actions. Razem wants to reform the secret services - transfer their military part to the General Staff of the Polish Army and establish a "committee of auditors" that would supervise the operational activities of the services so that they do not violate civil rights.

**Konfederacja wants "Safe borders".** This is the title of its defence policy programme, which declares that alliances and networks of international agreements will not be enough to maintain Poland's sovereignty. The mistake of the last 30 years, according to the party, was to rely on them instead of relying on our own capabilities. Konfederacja proposed to increase the size of the army (although without specific numbers), expand the territorial defence forces and arm citizens. The party believes that the role of citizens is crucial in building the security system and has called for increasing the availability of weapons and popularising military and civil defence training. The army should make greater use of soldier's personal equipment produced in Poland. Among large arms purchases, priority will be given to air defence, and in the organisation of the armed forces, it has proposed to reduce bureaucracy and place emphasis on reconnaissance and military intelligence.

## THE BOTTOM LINE

The election programmes in areas devoted to defence do not dispute the main directions of changes imposed by PiS: large weapons orders, development of capabilities and increasing the size of the army. Differences among the opposition concern nuances in the non-military sphere of security or in the verification and accountability of PiS decisions regarding weapons and soldiers. This allows us to predict that the current defence policy will be maintained regardless of who will be in power after the elections.

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## EUROPEAN UNION

EU reform  
unanimity  
expansion  
a multi-speed Europe  
national recovery plan  
rule of law  
farming subsidies  
social union  
polexit

KO wants to thaw the relationship with Brussels and unblock the recovery funds, while PiS wants deeper EU integration only for the willing. PSL is banking on agricultural policy, Lewica on social policy and Konfederacja is anti-EU.

**PiS wants a “diverse Europe”.** The programme “Secure Future for Poles” identifies taking back the growing powers of Brussels as the most important task in EU policy. It acknowledges that if the EU expands to more than 30 countries, unanimous decision-making will be very difficult. However, it opposes a move to majority voting - the solution is to “roll back” integration to areas acceptable to all countries. Willing states could instead deepen integration in selected areas. PiS calls for a referendum in one country opposing a European project to be able to stop it from going ahead in the EU, and for a petition signed by 10 per cent of the citizens of one country to oblige it to take legislative action. It also wants to limit the number of terms for officials at the European Commission and Court of Justice of the EU.

**KO aims to unblock recovery funds in 100 days.** The party wants to focus on improving relations with Brussels. It intends to unblock EU funds while ending the dispute over the rule of law. KO is already supposed to have a legal solution ready to meet the so-called rule of law-related milestones in the national recovery plan (KPO). It is supposed to avoid a presidential veto and unblock money in the first 100 days of government. The new opening with Brussels will allow Poland to return to the EU’s decision-making core and its role as Ukraine’s ambassador. According to KO, its constructive compromise-oriented EU policy - the opposite of PiS’s strategy of abusing the EU veto - will put an end to the debate in the community about whether to move away from unanimity to majority voting.

**Trzecia Droga focuses on regional cooperation.** Polska 2050 does not devote much space to EU affairs beyond general statements that Poland should be active in international forums. PSL has a more elaborate programme, which focuses on issues important to its electorate. It demands an increase in EU subsidies for Polish farmers to PLN 1,200 per hectare and the completion of negotiations for an EU-Mercosur free trade agreement - it fears that without it, Polish food will have to compete with cheaper, South American goods. According to the PSL, Poland should play a key role in the process of Ukraine’s integration into the EU. It would also

have to strengthen its voice in the community, for example, through the North-South group, which would bring together the six EU countries of greatest political and economic importance: Germany, Sweden, Poland, France, Italy, and Spain.

**Lewica wants to tighten integration in social affairs.** The party demands equal EU standards in labour law, social security and health care. Its programme envisages the adoption of the euro only after the convergence criteria have been met, at a time that is favourable to the Polish economy and when households are in a good position. Lewica is the only party on the political scene that is in favour of gradually moving away from unanimity in the EU towards a double-qualified majority (a minimum of 55 per cent of Member States representing at least 65 per cent of the EU's population). The party is also in favour of strengthening the defence pillar, by, for example, increasing Poland's involvement in already existing programmes under PESCO (the mechanism for cooperation in the defence dimension).

**Konfederacja plans obstructionism against the EU.** Like PiS, Konfederacja believes that Brussels is abusing its powers. However, it accuses the current government of having used its resources and rights ineffectively to combat this abuse. For example, it has not used the veto in decisions requiring unanimity (such as in climate policy and the reconstruction fund), and the Polish commissioner has not coordinated with the Polish government. The Konfederacja believes that unfavourable legislation that is passed despite the obstruction should be appealed to the Court of Justice and "interpreted in a way that is maximally consistent with the Polish national interest"; its implementation should be delayed for many years. Although Konfederacja's programme is the most anti-European of all, the party does not advocate leaving the EU.

## THE BOTTOM LINE

The ruling party abstracts in its programme from the most pressing challenges in EU policy: the withholding of EU funds, the non-implementation of CJEU rulings, or the blockade of imports from Ukraine that violates EU law and the consequences of maintaining it. The opposition singles out these issues as PiS mistakes, for which it intends to hold the ruling party to account. However, while it also announces its solutions, it is largely unspecific about how it intends to do so. Apart from Lewica, no party has defined its approach to monetary integration.

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## ENERGY SECTOR

coal  
nuclear programme  
renewable energy  
sources  
fair transition  
thermo-modernisation  
energy prices  
climate neutrality  
emission trading  
NABE

Most of the opposition talks about accelerating energy transition, although Konfederacja demands a return to coal. PiS wants to continue developing nuclear energy and support coal mining.

**PiS's priority is energy security.** The ruling party boasts that it has managed to “de-Russify” energy supplies, diversify the energy mix, and give more impetus to Poland’s nuclear programme. It has pledged to double the installed capacity of RES by 2030 (currently photovoltaics and wind farms amount to around 25 GW) by doubling the number of prosumers and other means. It also wants to invest in networks as well as small and large nuclear power plants, which will ultimately become the foundation of the energy mix. PiS intends to maintain support for the coal sector and fulfil the so-called social contract, which assumes that coal mining will be phased out by 2049. For individual customers, PiS has pledged to continue support programmes and thermo-modernisation, as well as replace heat sources in municipal flats.

**KO wants to liberalise the market and develop RES rapidly, but without quitting coal.** On September 21, a team of KO experts presented the assumptions of the party’s energy programme. The full version will be presented after the election. KO plans to freeze gas prices for households in 2024 at their current level and introduce a minimum price for purchasing energy from prosumers. Instead of the National Energy Security Agency (NABE), it wants to set up several competing companies and carve out distribution networks from energy groups. It will also work to increase the share of RES in the energy mix to 68 per cent in 2030 but has not set a deadline for phasing out coal mining - coal mines are to remain in operation until the deposits are exhausted and in accordance with the demand of domestic power plants. The nuclear programme would be implemented at a faster pace than the current one, and the development of gas-based energy would slow down.

**Lewica promises move away from fossil fuels and reform of EU ETS.** Shortly after the elections, the Left wants to prepare a plan to transform Poland’s mining regions. Employees of mines slated to be shut down would be able to seek assistance in finding employment in green industries without a reduction in salaries. In the future, the energy mix will be based on RES, nuclear energy, and energy storage facilities, including pumped-storage

hydroelectric plants. Households with average energy consumption (those in blocks of flats) would be entitled to a lower electricity tariff, and housing cooperatives and energy clusters would receive priority access to investment funding. Lewica would also like to strengthen energy cooperation in the EU and replace the CO2 emissions trading system (EU ETS) with a fee system that is less susceptible to speculation. It wants to spend all revenue from the sale of emission certificates on energy transition.

**Trzecia Droga proposes a “green” deputy prime minister and an end to fossil fuels.** The programme of the alliance of PSL and Polska 2050 is based on the strategy “Poland’s green path”, prepared by the Strategie 2050 Institute (think tank of Szymon Hołownia’s party) and published in March 2021. According to PI’s sources, PSL has no major objections to that plan. The programme’s authors stress the need to accelerate the decarbonisation of the electricity sector so that coal can be phased out by 2040 and Poland achieves climate neutrality by 2050. By the end of the decade, Trzecia Droga wants to eliminate all high emission furnaces. It also wants to set up a new green fund financed by the revenue from the EU ETS. Energy transition would be supervised by a minister with the rank of deputy prime minister and a committee for Decarbonisation of the Economy at the Council of Ministers.

**Konfederacja is committed to returning to coal and contesting EU policy.** According to Konfederacja, coal-fired blocks should remain the basis of the energy system, and coal mining should be maintained at a level that guarantees their operation. The government should also abandon the implementation of the EU’s climate policy and seek to be exempt from the EU ETS system (Konfederacja failed to indicate how to achieve this). However, it would also like to minimise the impact of coal on the environment by using a CO2 capture system (CCUS). Konfederacja would withdraw support for photovoltaic and wind farms - they want the market to verify their profitability. Instead, they would support nuclear and geothermal energy, and the construction of biogas and hydroelectric power plants.

## THE BOTTOM LINE

The pledges made by PiS are generally consistent with the current policy of the United Right. The proposals of the remaining parties are, for now, only assumptions that do not provide a full picture of the energy policy that would be pursued by their ministries. None of the political forces has based its campaign on proposals for the energy sector; according to an internet engagement survey this topic does not generate strong emotions, and the complexity of energy policy is too big to reach a wider audience among the electorate. However, the programmes help parties build credibility and conviction that they are capable of managing strategic sectors of the economy.

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## TRANSPORT AND INFRASTRUCTURE

expressways  
Central Railway Airport  
High-speed rail  
motorway tolls  
traffic exclusion  
common rail ticket  
regional links  
buses  
e-cars

PiS focuses on continuing investments, Lewica and Trzecia Droga on public transport and decarbonisation, and Konfederacja on cars. KO puts little emphasis on this topic.

**PiS wants to continue the investments it has started.** The ruling party's programme focuses on the implementation of previously announced long-term railway programmes, such as extending the railway network to towns that have over 10,000 inhabitants (the Rail Plus programme) and the construction of a high-speed rail line (HSR) as part of the so-called railway spokes (railway lines that converge at the Central Transport Hub or CPK). The CPK air-rail-road junction itself is to be launched in 2028. PiS also wants to support PKP Intercity in the expansion of its rolling stock, which is intended to increase the number of rail passengers. It also plans to build another 3,000 km of expressways (their current total distance amounts to around 5,000 km), including the Via Carpatia expressway that will pass through eastern Poland and the bypass that circumvents Warsaw's metropolitan area, as well as 100 bypasses of smaller towns. It also intends to abolish tolls for passenger car drivers on licensed sections of motorways. To develop bus transport, it wants to increase funding for local governments to keep bus services in operation.

**KO does not propose much in terms of infrastructure.** In the "100 policies" for the first 100 days announced at the beginning of September, KO did not put much focus on transport: it only proposed to reduce VAT for public transport services in a move intended to lower ticket prices (Lewica has said that it is not KO's original idea and that it was first to introduce the draft legislation in this regard months ago). KO also wants to "review" the CPK project: it has said it would stop "bandit" expropriations for this investment - formally, however, the expropriation process can only begin when the CPK company obtains a location decision, which has not happened yet (so far it has acquired land in the so-called voluntary acquisition programme). KO also wants to block the sale of land in Warsaw's Okęcie airport after the Chopin airport is shut down. In addition, It has announced the construction of a new grain terminal in the port of Gdańsk.

**Lewica focuses on the fight against transport exclusion.** Its priority is the development of railway and bus services: railway transport would be available in every county, and public bus transport - in every municipality. This would enable investments in the railway network, including the construction of high-speed lines and international routes, as well as greater funding for local governments for bus transport and direct subsidising of local lines from the budget. In addition, Lewica would like to introduce a ticket for local and regional transport at PLN 59 per month, following the example of Germany. It also wants to transform the PKP PLK company, which is responsible for the construction and management of the railway network, into an entity with greater powers, that would resemble the General Motorway and National Roads Administration. Regarding car traffic, Lewica has focused on improving safety and developing infrastructure for electric and hydrogen cars.

**Konfederacja addresses areas that fall within the interests of drivers.** The party does not propose new infrastructure investments but would like to reduce to a minimum the fees incurred by drivers. It has pledged to lower the VAT, fuel excise tax, and fuel fee, as well as eliminate emissions and reserve fees. Reducing the fuel fee would limit the income of the National Road Fund (KFD), which to a large extent finances the construction of new road sections - Konfederacja failed to put forward any proposals for other sources of funding for these projects. It has also expressed its opposition to the EU ban on registering new combustion cars after 2035 and the regulations related to the “Mobility Package”, which regulates the method of posting of drivers and their working time - to protect the interest of road transport companies, it would like to revoke it.

**Trzecia Droga wants to decarbonise transport.** The coalition led by Szymon Hołownia and Władysław Kosiniak-Kamysz has proposed an introduction of subsidies for transport companies (particularly family businesses) that would make it easier for them to turn their fleet electric. This proposal complements the list of other pledges made by the group related to accelerating the decarbonisation of the economy. Trzecia Droga, like PiS and Lewica, would like railway services to reach smaller towns. At the beginning of 2023, Polska 2050 also called for the introduction of a monthly transport pass (which it said would cost PLN 150), which could be used for all means of public transport, even for interregional transport. However, the proposal was criticised because it could greatly reduce the revenue of companies that offer long-distance transport (for instance, PKP Intercity), which would limit their development.

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## AGRICULTURE AND FORESTRY

food from Ukraine  
local products  
purchase prices  
European Green Deal  
rebuilding pork  
production  
National Food Group  
grain port  
deforestation  
biogas

Most parties promise to reduce imports from Ukraine, promote local products and tackle the consequences of drought. All want to develop RES, including biogas plants in the countryside.

**PiS wants to protect family farms.** It also plans to support cooperatives and associations to increase farmers' control over prices and their profits. The so-called Spanish law is designed to guarantee that products are not bought below cost. PiS wants to revive pig farming and Polish food processing, including of soft fruit and meat - to this end, it intends to strengthen the National Food Group with a capital injection. It also wants to create a chain of grocery shops under its umbrella and a "Local shelf" programme with two-thirds of fruit, vegetables, bread, dairy, and meat products in supermarkets sourced from local or national suppliers. It will be possible to check the country of origin on receipts. PiS also wants to monitor trade with Ukraine, control the quality of imports and build an agroport for grain exports. It promises to improve water management and develop RES, including biogas plants in the countryside and says it will defend forests against Brussels' control.

**KO is banking on domestic food in shops.** At least half of the products on offer should come from Poland, and all fresh produce should be labelled with the flag of the country of origin. KO promises modern markets in every town, wants to increase storage space and build a new grain port in Gdańsk. It plans to revive pig farming (with bioassurance to be financed from the budget). Farmers' losses resulting from fraud by intermediaries and hunting damage should be covered by a stabilisation fund. It also promises to build local systems for retaining water in the soil. KO wants to support investment in biogas plants, photovoltaics and heat pumps in the countryside. It plans to exclude the most environmentally valuable forest areas from logging, stop the uncontrolled export of unprocessed wood from Poland and ensure social supervision of forests.

**Konfederacja opposes the European Green Deal.** It rejects the "EU's ideological climate policy", including restrictions on the use of pesticides or cage farming. Anti-farming organisations would not be allowed access to farms. It also promises measures to open up new export routes, especially to non-EU countries dependent on food imports. It wants to give

farmers the right to own hunting weapons and use them under simplified rules. It would be possible to erect any production buildings on one's own land, not covered by a zoning plan. The party also proposes subsistence energy generation without accounting for transmission costs and additional charges, and the right to produce biofuel for its own use.

**The Left wants to abolish fur farms and cage farming by 2027.** It is the only party to propose the appointment of an animal rights ombudsman. It promises an “anti-odor” law, introducing the concept of odour nuisance and enabling the administration to eliminate it. It intends to help farmers reduce spending on fertilisers and pesticides. The Left has promised to buy (e.g. grain) for material reserves to improve the profitability of production and to support local processing. It also wants markets and purchasing companies to have a 30-day limit to pay farmers. It promises extra money for farmers' insurance and bio-assurance. The party plans to encourage markets and canteens to buy local food and to ensure that imported food is quality controlled. The Left plans to develop biogas plants and biomethane plants. State forests would become a government agency and a minimum of 6 per cent of the country's area (excluding national parks) would be excluded from logging.

**Trzecia Droga wants a deposit system for Ukrainian food.** The deposit would be paid on entry and recovered on exit. This would curb “uncontrolled imports” (which would also be helped by reinforced border inspections) and ensure safe transit from which Polish companies would make money. It plans to increase assistance for the technological modernisation of farms and premiums for young farmers and to simplify applying for subsidies. Farmers would be able to produce energy from RES and earn money from it. Trzecia Droga wants to limit timber exports and aims to protect the most valuable 20 per cent of forests from logging.

## THE BOTTOM LINE

If PiS holds on to power after the elections, it will continue its current agricultural and forestry policies. The question is whether this time it will fulfil the promises it has been making for years, such as building an agri-port, improving water management or reviving pig farming. If the opposition comes to power, improving food transit from Ukraine and promoting local products seem realistic. The biggest controversy will surround the implementation of the European Green Deal, including animal welfare. By contrast, the cross-party consensus on developing RES, including rural biogas plants, is a good sign.

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## DIGITISATION

cyber security  
digital exclusion  
broadband internet  
digital literacy  
artificial intelligence  
regulatory sandboxes  
targeted advertising  
data collection  
mCitizen

PiS wants to improve digital public services. For KO, the topic of digitisation is not a priority, while Lewica has presented an entire strategy in this area.

**PiS focuses on digital knowledge and services for citizens.** It promises to create “digital senior citizen clubs” and organise nationwide coding lessons, as well as “active technology labs” for students and teachers. Minister of Digitisation Janusz Cieszyński - who is considered to be quite effective in this area - is publicising further plans for the digitisation of public services, including expanding the capabilities of the mCitizen application. PiS also promises to further expand broadband coverage and says that it will set up a “national technology expansion fund”, improve the process of commercialising of research and speed up the construction of data centres.

**KO has forgotten digitisation.** Digital topics are not a priority for the largest opposition force - none of its “100 Proposals for 100 Days” directly addresses this area. Only the promise to create an online appointment booking system for the public health system is slightly related. During the March 2022 “Safe Poland” convention, PO presented three demands regarding cybersecurity. These included the creation of a help centre for citizens affected by cyber-attacks and an alert system for data extortion attempts, as well as increasing the digital security competencies of young people. When asked about digital issues, KO politicians declare a willingness to work with businesses and warn against overregulation.

**Lewica has shown a digital state strategy.** In its election programme, the only proposal regarding digitisation was the establishment of a cybersecurity agency. During the September forum in Karpacz, however, Lewica’s politicians presented a separate strategy for the digitisation of the state. In it, they proposed changing the structure of the government so that a digitisation plenipotentiary at the rank of deputy minister is present in each ministry. Lewica wants to improve the working conditions of digitisation specialists in the public sector, create a uniform digitisation strategy and ensure the effective functioning of the so-called regulatory sandboxes (a legal regime in which companies proposing new solutions are not initially covered by certain regulations). It also proposes the creation of a half-billion artificial intelligence research fund and the introduction of a tax on profiled advertising.

**Trzecia Droga wants digitisation to stop the depopulation of rural areas.** The proposals of PSL, which is part of Trzecia Droga, focus on improving internet access in less urbanised areas. Children would be covered by the iTornister programme, which would provide pupils with tablets and electronic versions of textbooks. Farmers are expected to benefit from the opportunity to complete applications online. All the solutions are intended to counter depopulation of rural areas. Meanwhile, Polska 2050 draws attention to the excessive amount of data on citizens collected by the state and on the issue of their security and demands greater control over the actions of the administration. It also wants to fight against over-regulation of the sector.

**Konfederacja opposes the regulation of freedom of expression.** This is the only demand that directly resounds in the grouping's programme. The party had already prepared a deregulation draft legislation on the issue of freedom of speech. Digital transformation as a whole is not a priority topic for Konfederacja - in the current term, for example, it does not have a representative in the Sejm committee on digitisation. Konfederacja is in favour of supporting the development of digital infrastructure, but according to the party, this should be done through tax exemptions, not transfers of funds. Its demands do not include the development of society's digital knowledge, but it calls for giving more freedom to school principals, teachers and parents in shaping the curriculum.

## THE BOTTOM LINE

The digital transformation of the economy and administration is not a topic that parties pay much attention to, probably because it does not win many voters. The best prepared here are Lewica and PiS, which have done the intellectual work and turned digital demands into a programme or part of it. The other parties draw attention to digital transformation with other demands, such as streamlining administration. Konfederacja's emphasis is on freedom of speech on the internet, but this can hardly be called a coherent programme. In the event of a PiS win, we should expect a continuation of the course with an emphasis on developing new functionalities in the mCitizen app. In the event of an opposition win, the Ministry of Digitisation, as a less prestigious ministry, may fall to one of the coalition partners, with Lewica being the default choice here.

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## HEALTH

health spending  
hospital limits  
queues to doctors  
long-term care  
health vouchers  
privatisation  
child psychiatry  
oncology network  
reimbursement

The parties do not propose systemic reforms that would make a real difference to health care. There is a strong emphasis on reproductive health. PiS focuses on the policy of continuity.

**PiS does not change its priorities.** The document “A Safe Future for Poles” focuses more on the achievements of the ruling camp than on new ideas. It sees a continuation of the existing policy (development of a cardiology and oncology network, creation of a neurology network, staff training, 7 per cent of GDP on health by 2027). PiS wants to support county hospitals and, in response to demographic changes, transform some of them into long-term care centres. It also wants to expand the list of modern reimbursed therapies, invest in sanitary inspection, and support Polish medicines manufacturers. It promises to return dentists to schools.

**KO wants decentralisation and the abolition of hospital limits.** KO wants the National Health Fund (NFZ) to decide on the financing of services in a decentralised manner, based on health needs maps. Queues to specialists are expected to be shortened by the reimbursement of private visits for patients who have not received public services and by more efficient appointment booking. The “100 proposals for 100 days” document proposes eliminating the limits on hospital treatment - the cost is approximately PLN 23 billion (NFZ plans PLN 74.3 billion for hospital treatment in 2024). According to PI’s sources, KO is considering funding from excise duties, additional health insurance and funds from the national recovery plan. KO wants to fund in vitro from the budget (at a cost of at least PLN 500 million) and introduce County Health Centres in areas with lower availability of services. It also proposes emergency contraception without a prescription and abortion up to the 12th week without a conscience clause.

**Trzecia Droga promises an appointment with a specialist within two months.** The party wants to increase spending on health to 7 per cent of GDP and to relieve county hospitals of debt by making valuations of services more realistic. A visit to a specialist within two months or reimbursement of the cost of a private visit from the NFZ are among Trzecia Droga’s “12 guarantees”. The party calls for a return to the so-called abortion compromise and a referendum on abortion, as well as a publicly funded in vitro programme. PSL is in favour of abolishing the

NFZ and creating health insurance funds, as well as supporting local governments in financing hospitals. Polska 2050 wants reform of child psychiatry (health-promoting education, a psychologist at school, reimbursement for private visits to a psychiatrist when there is a long waiting time).

**Lewica wants to stop privatisation and proposes medicines for PLN 5.** The party wants an increase in health expenditure to 8 per cent of GDP, without the N-2 methodology (an accounting procedure that inflates expenditure expressed as a percentage of GDP). This is expected to shorten queues to doctors and relieve hospitals of debt (they are also expected to receive PLN 4 billion a year for modernisation). Lewica wants to stop privatisation, outsourcing, and transformation of facilities into commercial companies; private hospitals would not be able to provide the NFZ services. Medicines should cost no more than PLN 5 (free of charge for retirees, disability pensioners, children, pregnant women, and transplant recipients), and the role of primary care is also expected to increase. Access to dentists, psychologists, and psychiatrists should be increased. Abortion up to the 12th week (at the woman's sole discretion), emergency contraception without a prescription, and a public in vitro programme are to be available. A programme to develop Poland's pharmaceutical industry is expected to increase drug safety.

**Konfederacja focuses on competition between insurers and health vouchers.** According to the party, it is bureaucracy, not low expenditure, that is the main problem of health care. The flagship proposal is to break up the monopoly of the NFZ and introduce competition among insurers. This is expected to improve the quality of services, increase salaries in the medical profession, and remedy the staff crisis. Instead of health contributions, Konfederacja proposes an age-dependent health voucher. It also mentions co-payments and medical savings accounts inspired by Singaporean solutions, however, there are no details. The party's politicians often question social solidarity and, under freedom slogans, shift responsibility for health decisions and related expenses to the patient.

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## EDUCATION

pay rises for teachers  
patriotic education  
professions of the future  
homework  
extra classes  
education vouchers  
religion in school  
trade schools  
„sexualisation of  
children”

In their election programmes, all parties promise to reduce bureaucracy in schools and improve working and learning conditions. They differ in their approach to the values that school is supposed to convey.

**PiS combines a traditional and modern approach.** In its programme, it has announced investments in school infrastructure and greater stress on teaching first aid, patriotic education (including in the form of subsidised school trips), and protection of children against “sexualization.” It has pledged changes in the timetable and an increase in the scope of extracurricular activities in schools; it also wants to provide co-funding for school meals. In the first years of primary school, students are expected to do their homework at school, under the supervision of a teacher. Teachers are promised that their prestige will be restored and that they will face less bureaucracy. PiS would like secondary and universities to educate for “jobs of the future”: from food processing to nuclear technologies. It has also proposed a special programme of grants for humanists and to reform the grant system at the National Science Centre, which is intended to promote researchers from smaller centres.

**KO has something for students and teachers.** KO has pledged to increase salaries for teachers by 30 per cent (an amount of at least PLN 1,500) and introduce an indexation system of teacher salaries. It also wants to depoliticise schools: withdraw the controversial subject “historia i teraźniejszość” (history and the present), change the core curriculum, and increase the autonomy of teachers. Textbooks are to be available as e-books and primary schools are to stop assigning homework and expand the offer of additional classes. As regards academic education and science, KO intends to increase funding and transparency of its distribution (although it has not provided details) and review the list of ranked scientific journals.

**The left wants to remove the influence of Czarnek in the education sector.** In its programme, it wants to undo a large part of the right-wing reforms in education, especially those introduced by Przemysław Czarnek’s MinEdu. It calls for removing religion from schools, reviewing the core curriculum, and greater cooperation between schools, non-governmental organisations, and local communities. It wants to appoint a “national ombudsman for students’

rights” and introduce mandatory student ombudsmen in all schools. It calls for anti-discrimination training for teachers and psychosocial education for parents, as well as cooperation between schools and psychological and pedagogical counselling centres. Students are to gain access to free public transport, lunches and textbooks (also in secondary schools), as well as e-book readers with subscriptions to books and magazines. According to the left, the school should better teach about health, climate, and cybersecurity and be better prepared for students with special educational needs. The left also wants to improve the quality of secondary technical schools and vocational schools - the latter are also to cooperate with trade unions. Teachers are to receive a 20 per cent raise, and their salaries are to be supported by the state budget. Moreover, the left supports the pursuit of gender parity in doctoral graduates and university authorities.

**Trzecia Droga pledges that 6 per cent of GDP will be spent on education.** Trzecia Droga wants to provide additional funding for more hours of English language learning from year one of primary school. As a result, students after primary school would be fluent in one foreign language. PSL and Polska 2050 coalition have called for a thorough review of school curricula so that they focus on the development of competencies (including digital ones) rather than knowledge. It has also pledged to increase the autonomy of schools, which will result in their depoliticisation. Trzecia Droga wants to increase access to universities by co-financing the development of a network of dormitories “for one zloty”, particularly for young people from smaller towns and less wealthy families. Polska 2050 calls for the introduction of “various parity systems” in access to science-related funding.

**Konfederacja wants to introduce an education voucher.** Konfederacja programme assumes far-reaching deregulation of the education and care sector: the state would only provide funding, ensure compliance with the most basic rules (occupational health and safety) in institutions, and conduct annual examinations. Parents would receive an education and care voucher to be redeemed at a selected facility, from nurseries to schools. Schools could continue to be run by public entities (local governments), but they would have to compete for students with private institutions. They could also look for other sources of funding (not specified in the programme) apart from the voucher. The state would be responsible for conducting exams prepared by independent experts, but would not impose the curriculum or the structure of the school year on schools. The reform would be carried out gradually and would involve deregulating the teaching profession and shutting down education authorities.

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Senior Business Analyst





# New reality: Post-election briefing

When Poles make their decision at the ballot box on October 15, the election campaign will be over. But, the no less intense time of forming a government will begin. If the elections end with a result resembling the current polls, the process could be particularly difficult.

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## KEY QUESTIONS

**The winner** - who won the election and why, will the party with the most votes have a chance to form a government

**Council of Ministers** - who may be the new ministers, who will play key roles in the emerging balance of power, what the division of ministries may be

**State-controlled companies** - what's next for them, who will gain influence and what will happen to the mega-projects started by PiS - CPK and the construction of a nuclear power plant

**Sectoral policies** - who will really be in charge of economic policy, what will be the division of responsibilities in European affairs, where will decisions be taken on energy and climate issues

**Business** - how the election result and the new balance of power will impact doing business in Poland



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tax-free amount  
 Personal income tax and  
 VAT rates  
 subsidies for business  
 state companies  
 public low-cost loan  
 programme  
 Sunday shopping  
 Belka's tax  
 Anti-usury

Politicians are outbidding each other on tax and contribution relief, especially for the self-employed. What stands out in the programmes are trade ideas aimed at farmers.

**Parties are competing on lowering taxes.** PiS boasts of having brought about a reduction in personal income tax from 18 to 12 per cent and an increase in the tax-free amount to PLN 30 000. KO, meanwhile, promises to double the tax-free amount to PLN 60,000 a year. It promises business owners a reinstatement of a flat-rate health contribution (i.e. a reversal of the changes introduced by PiS in 2021) and taxing income only on paid invoices. A new proposal from KO is paid leave for the self-employed. Konfederacja focuses on personal income tax reductions (a 12 per cent flat rate and a tax-free amount of twelve times the minimum wage, i.e. approximately PLN 43,200). It wants to abolish 15 taxes (for instance, the sugar tax) and introduce voluntary Social Security for business owners. Trzecia Droga is banking on family-based personal income tax calculations (together with children), paying VAT and income tax on paid invoices and ZUS relief in times of economic hardship. It promises no tax increases throughout the parliamentary term. Lewica wants a reduction in the basic VAT rate and more progressivity in personal income tax.

**Differences in approach to supporting business.** PiS wants to support businesses with subsidies and tax exemptions, especially in return for creating jobs in places that are far from major metropolitan areas. State subsidies for investments and the promotion of local companies operating with respect for workers and the environment are also part of Lewica's promises. KO does not talk about supporting investments, but wants to limit the duration of inspections in micro businesses to six days a year. It also promises to reduce VAT for the beauty industry from 23 to 8 per cent. Trzecia Droga proposes to make officials more accountable for mistakes and to include business associations in the legislative process.

**The opposition wants a revolution in state-owned companies.** KO promises to conduct new recruitment to management and supervisory boards by means of transparent competition. It promises to hold accountable those involved in "all of Obajtek's scandals, including the sale

of shares in the Gdańsk Refinery”. Trzecia Droga also wants to remove party appointees from state companies and replace them with apolitical appointment committees. Lewica wants competitions for positions in state companies to be held by a Competence Council with the participation of social partners, the government, and the opposition. PiS praises its policy on state-owned companies - it draws attention to “halting the privatisation” companies such as LOT Polish Airlines, the “repolonisation” of banks (such as Pekao SA), the creation of a “multi-energy corporation operating on a European scale that is Orlen”.

**Some parties want to reintroduce Sunday shopping.** PiS wants to regulate franchising and grant equality to the market players. It also promises a “Local Shelf” programme (two-thirds of local food in shops) and a digital food passport to enable Polish origin of goods to be indicated on receipts and shelves. KO wants at least half of the basic food products in shops to come from Poland and to make it compulsory to display the flag of the country of origin on all fresh produce in shops. It wants to abolish the PiS government’s ban on Sunday shopping, while giving each employee two weekends off per month and double pay for working on their days off. Trzecia Droga proposes two shopping Sundays per month.

**Banking issues on the back burner.** KO proposes to exempt savings of up to PLN 100,000 held for more than a year from the Belka tax. This is more radical than Konfederacja’s idea, which is only to make profits from deposits and bonds tax-free. PiS boasts of subsidised mortgage loans and promises to fast-track court cases of borrowers with mortgages in Swiss francs and to shift the burden of proof to the banks. Lewica promises a public programme of low-cost loans and a ban on “rogue lenders”, which probably means tightening the so-called “anti-usury” legislation.

**The opposition parties differ in their ideas on inflation and public finances.** KO wants to allow the National Bank of Poland to directly draw liquidity from the household sector by issuing so-called anti-inflation bonds. A facility of that name is also included in Lewica’s programme, which wants to fight inflation by taxing the profits of energy companies, combating price collusion and investing in solutions to help reduce energy consumption. Lewica also wants to increase the transparency of public finances by subjecting the spending of extra-budgetary funds to parliamentary scrutiny - this has already been partly introduced by the PiS government with an amendment to the Public Finance Act, which will come into force in 2024.

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## STATE PERFORMANCE

police  
Supreme Court  
anti-communist Security  
Service law  
National Media Council  
court structure  
RTV licence fee  
supervision of the  
services  
magistrates

The opposition parties focus in their programmes on reversing the changes introduced during the eight years of PiS rule, including in the judiciary and public media.

**PiS and the opposition have conflicting ideas on changes to the judiciary.** PiS announces in its programme further changes to the Supreme Court (SN), which would become an “elite court of law”. The ruling party proposes flattening the structure of the courts and reducing their cognition (the catalogue of cases dealt with by the courts) - registration and land registry matters would be transferred to notaries. PiS also promises the digitisation of the judiciary and a special path for the settlement of Swiss franc lawsuits. The opposition focuses on reversing the changes introduced by PiS to restore the rule of law in Poland and end conflicts with the European Commission. KO proposes the abolition of the National Council of the Judiciary (KRS), appointed by the PiS politicians, and the “judgment” of judges who have betrayed their oaths (presumably referring to those who have gone through the procedure before the flawed KRS). All opposition parties call for the separation of the functions of the Ministry of Justice and Prosecutor General. Lewica proposes the introduction of justices of the peace and an increase in the salaries of court employees (PiS has also proposed this).

**KO wants to revoke the de-communisation law, Lewica wants to increase supervision of the special services.** PiS proposes the continuation of support programmes for uniformed services. It also wants officers to be able to “stay in the service for as long as possible and for their families to receive adequate financial support”. KO promises to hold Chief of Police Jarosław Szymczyk accountable for the use of the elite Anti-Terrorist Operations Bureau to suppress assemblies. It announces the restoration of pensions to police officers who were deprived of them under the so-called de-communisation law, which came into force at the end of 2016. Lewica wants serious changes in the functioning of the services - it proposes the introduction of real judicial supervision over operational activities (including wiretapping), the equipping of all police officers with cameras, and the opening of the Central Police Monitoring Office, whose task would be to investigate “complaints and requests against the police”.

**The opposition wants to depoliticise the public media.** All parties of the so-called democratic opposition want profound changes in the public media and the abolition of the National Media Council. This is a PiS-appointed body that took over from the National Broadcasting Council (KRRiT) the powers to staff the bodies of the state broadcasters (TVP and Polskie Radio). KO wants to bring Maciej Świrski, head of the KRRiT, before the State Tribunal for “destroying the public media”. Polska 2050 would like to abolish the RTV licence fee, which would entail a change in the public media financing model. They would be maintained from a special fund, fed by tax write-offs from the largest digital companies. PiS politicians believe that the current shape of public media is good and contributes to the growth of pluralism.

**The parties see the funding of local government differently.** The coalition wants to increase the share of local governments in the personal income tax, but its amount will only be determined after the elections. Polska 2050 also makes a similar demand, adding a 3 per cent share of VAT. This is in response to the “Polish Deal” introduced by PiS, which, by reducing the income tax, led to a depletion of local government tax revenues, making it necessary to introduce compensation. Szymon Hołownia’s party has several ideas that converge with Lewica- it proposes increasing the attractiveness of local governments as employers (by raising salaries and improving working conditions). KO wants to allocate PLN 10 billion for the revitalisation and renovation of vacant buildings owned by local governments. PiS proposes the introduction of a mid-term referendum day (to strengthen local democracy) and financial support for local governments in the construction of nurseries.

## THE BOTTOM LINE

The issues of the functioning of the courts and the public media are the key axis of the dispute between PiS and the opposition. There is no chance that any actions in these areas could be agreed on cross-party lines. If the opposition wins the elections, it will be difficult to quickly implement changes to the judiciary or the public media, not least because the president is from a different political camp and the Constitutional Tribunal is highly politicised. PiS’s ideas, such as changes in the Supreme Court and related to the flattening of the court structure, could create further tensions in relations with the European Commission.

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## SOCIAL ISSUES

800 plus  
low-cost rental housing  
reduction in working  
hours  
length-of-service  
pensions  
0 per cent loans  
funeral allowance  
13th and 14th pensions  
alimony

PiS's programme lacks new proposals. KO and Lewica want to legalise abortion and finance IVF. Konfederacja is the only party in favour of abolishing 500+.

**PiS, KO and Lewica want to increase 500+, while Konfederacja wants to abolish it.** PiS plans to raise 500+ to PLN 800 from January 1, 2024; it also wants a crèche in every municipality. KO says that when it comes to family benefits, “nothing that has been given will be taken away” (including 800+). It also promises that mothers who go back to work will get PLN 1,500 of the so-called “granny allowance”. Lewica wants to introduce an annual indexation of 800+ and provide 100,000 new crèches and free lunches for schoolchildren. Trzecia Droga is split over 500+, with Polska 2050 reluctant to raise the benefit, and PSL wanting to do so - but only for working people. Konfederacja is in favour of abolishing it altogether. In terms of family benefits and work, it is Lewica that has the most extensive programme. According to the party, sick leave should be fully paid, unemployment benefits and the number of leave days should be increased, and there should be fewer weekly working hours. It also wants to restrict so-called junk contracts and count them towards seniority.

**KO and Trzecia Droga are betting on tax-free pensions, PiS and Lewica on length-of-service pensions.** Trzecia Droga and KO want to attract senior citizens with the promise of tax-free pensions, the former for all, and the latter for those grossing below PLN 5,000. KO also promises a second indexation of pensions when inflation exceeds 5 per cent and the restoration of acquired rights to uniformed pensioners. It also wants to raise the funeral allowance to 150 per cent of the minimum wage (from July 2024 - 6450 PLN, currently - 4000 PLN) and transfer the setting of fees for the use of religious cemeteries to local authorities. PiS promises length-of-service pensions and to continue with the 13th and 14th pensions. Lewica wants seniority pensions, widow's pensions, a second indexation of pensions in September, raising the funeral allowance to PLN 8,000, the withdrawal of the “repressive law on uniformed services” and a senior travel voucher. Konfederacja wants the 13th and 14th pensions to be abolished.

**PiS and KO want cheap credit, Lewica wants rental housing.** KO is promoting a 0 per cent mortgage for the first flat and a PLN 600 rental subsidy. In order to increase the supply of flats,



it wants to release land from the National Property Stock, which was transferred to it for the purposes of Housing+, as well as from- and here it agrees with PiS - land owned by state companies. PiS also promises to maintain the 2 per cent mortgage and to extend the loan holiday (with an income criterion) until 2024. Trzecia Droga promises “affordable housing and student dormitory accommodation for a złoty”. Lewica wants to build 300,000 inexpensive rental flats by 2029 and temporarily freeze mortgage interest rates from before 2022. Konfederacja offers tax relief on housing loans and “construction that is 30 per cent cheaper”.

**KO, Trzecia Droga and Lewica in favour of IVF, PiS and Konfederacja against it.** KO’s proposals for women also include the legalisation of abortion up to the 12th week of pregnancy and reimbursed anaesthesia during labour as well as prenatal examinations. It also promises an increase in Alimony Fund allowances from PLN 500 to PLN 1,000. Trzecia Droga wants to reverse the effects of the Constitutional Tribunal’s “shameful verdict” and a referendum on abortion. It also will work towards closing the wage gap between men and women. A similar proposal comes from Lewica which also promises legal abortion up to the 12th week and reimbursed prenatal testing. It proposes that alimony be collected by tax offices, just like tax arrears. PiS believes in the imperative to save the life of the mother given “legitimate grounds for abortion”. Konfederacja politicians’ statements indicate that they want stricter regulation of abortion and IVF.

**The parties agree on the professionalisation of care services.** KO proposes a care voucher equal to half the minimum wage for carers of people with disabilities. It wants to equalise social pensions with the minimum wage, make it possible to combine pensions with work, and develop professional assistant services. PiS promises a law on personal assistance (the prime minister’s chancellery has been working on this in the current parliamentary term) and the creation of a network of assisted housing as well as removing architectural barriers (which it already proposed in its 2019 programme). It also wants better salaries and working conditions for social workers. On top of professional care services and supported housing, Lewica promises to reform the disability assessment system, make the size of benefits more consistent, and flexibly combine care and work. It also wants to make rehabilitation more accessible. Personal assistance also features on Trzecia Droga’s list of guarantees. Konfederacja has no proposals for people with disabilities, despite having submitted a proposal in the current term enabling caregivers to combine work with benefits.

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## HUMAN, WOMEN'S AND MINORITY RIGHTS

abortion  
sexual violence  
wage gap  
separation of church and state  
civil partnerships  
same-sex marriage  
State Labour Inspectorate  
strikes

The majority of the opposition wants a secular state, changes for women and LGBT+ people as well as a strengthening of workers' rights. PiS and Konfederacja's programmes tend to be silent on these issues.

**KO, the Left and Trzecia Droga put strong emphasis on women's rights.** The parties favour the legalisation of abortion up to the 12th week of pregnancy and abolishing the conscience clause so that hospitals cannot refuse to offer women the procedure. Trzecia Droga would like to restore the status quo from before the ConTrib verdict of 2020 and then hold a referendum on the issue. PiS opposes abortion but "believes in the imperative to save the life of the mother". The Left and Trzecia Droga promise equal pay for men and women: the Left wants to ensure that workers have the right to be informed about the wage gap in the workplace and to give powers to the State Labour Inspectorate (PIP) to order changes to the wage structure. The Left also wants a change in the statutory definition of rape (it would occur in the absence of voluntary consent, not in the absence of visible resistance), while Polska 2050 wants to create a network of counselling centres treating the aftermath of sexual violence.

**They also want a firm separation of Church and State.** KO, the Left, and Trzecia Droga want to abolish the State Church Fund, which subsidises the clergy's social security contributions. The Left seeks to terminate the Concordat, and would also like to remove religion from schools and order churches to keep records of income. It also intends to curb the Church's acquisition of agricultural land from the state free of charge or at very low prices and to abolish the exception established in favour of the Church from restrictions on the sale of agricultural land. Like Polska 2050, it also wants to move away from criminalising insults to religious feelings. KO calls for religion lessons to be held as either the first or last lesson; it also wants to remove religion grades from certificates. Trzecia Droga, on the other hand, wants to leave the decision on teaching religion classes to school communities. The party would also appoint a commission to investigate financial irregularities in dealings between the State and Church.

**KO and the Left want more rights for LGBT+ people, PiS and Konfederacja are against.** KO wants to introduce civil partnerships that would be available to all people, regardless of

gender. This demand is not included in Trzecia Droga's programme. However, statements made by its politicians suggest that it supports civil partnerships but would be against same-sex marriage. The latter proposal has, however, been put forward by the Left. The grouping also wants to facilitate the legal and medical procedure for gender realignment, ban so-called conversion therapies, and criminalise hate speech related to psychosexual orientation and gender identity. PiS, on the other hand, emphasises that marriage can only be understood as a union between a man and a woman. The party's politicians have also spoken out against civil partnerships. This stance is shared by Konfederacja.

**The Left and Trzecia Droga are banking on the strengthening of workers' rights.** The Left wants to increase the budget of the Labour Inspectorate (PIP) and create a prosecution division within it for particularly blatant violations of the law. It also promises to increase penalties for labour rights violations. Its programme also includes facilitation of strike referendums and solidarity strikes. Trzecia Droga also seeks to strengthen the PIP, and proposes, among other things, to make it easier for victims of bullying to assert their rights through civil and administrative channels.

**PiS and Konfederacja warn against migration, the Left talks about the right to asylum.** PiS favours a system of "external" reception and asylum centres in "third countries", where people whose applications for international protection have been rejected but who are unable to return quickly to their country of origin would be placed. Konfederacja wants to strengthen the Border Guard and improve procedures for detecting and expelling migrants who have entered the country without proper documents. KO and Trzecia Droga's programmes do not mention the issue of refugees. The Left does, however, emphasise that the state must unconditionally respect the right to apply for international protection, including making it possible to submit an appropriate application at the border and on Polish territory.

## THE BOTTOM LINE

Worldview issues are one of the key topics of the campaign and can be decisive in the fight for votes - according to a study carried out by CBOS in September 2023, they are among voters' top motivations. In the debate over these issues, KO, the Left, and Trzecia Droga are at the opposite end of the spectrum to PiS and Konfederacja. However, while the former put forward a number of demands that form an important part of their programmes, the latter do not have many new proposals in theirs. They mostly defend the status quo and - having learned from, for instance, women's protests over abortion - may avoid more radical proposals for fear of a reaction from the electorate.

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## CULTURE

national identity  
new cultural institutions  
insurance for artists  
cultural diversity  
censorship  
director competitions  
centralisation  
DSM Directive  
copyright

On culture, the opposition and PiS differ on almost everything - from artists' insurance to the government's influence on institutional appointments to online copyright protection.

**KO, Lewica support insurance for artists, PiS has dropped the idea.** KO and Lewica promise legislation that would guarantee social and health insurance for artists. Draft legislation on the artist profession, drafted by the cultural community, is ready - for Lewica its enactment is a priority. PiS announced a similar bill before the 2019 elections. Ministry of Culture referred the draft to legislative work in the previous term, but work on it stalled after a review by the Digitisation Committee in September 2022. In a recent interview with Rzeczpospolita, minister Piotr Gliński said that the initiative “politically is not feasible today, because celebrities have granted themselves the right to insult not only us (PiS), but a significant part of Polish society”. In its current programme, the party promises to strengthen the status of artists and cultural workers through scholarship, research and internship programmes.

**PiS focuses on nationalist culture, the opposition on the heritage of diversity.** In PiS's vision, culture is “the basis for the existence of every national community, the source and pillar of national identity and the foundation of patriotism”. Since 2015, the party has made its actions subordinate to this vision (such as the construction of the Museum of Polish History). Lewica, on the other hand, wants to move away from a “narrow national-Catholic approach” in culture and base it on respect for the diversity of historical and cultural heritage. Polska 2050 would like to support critical and experimental art and direct culture to people with different worldviews.

**The opposition wants to end censorship and depoliticise appointments in culture.** KO, Lewica, PSL and Polska 2050 promise to abolish the censorship imposed on culture (its many examples are discussed, for example, in the US Artistic Freedom Initiative's 2022 report). It is also about economic censorship, or withdrawing funding from institutions inconvenient to the authorities. For example, Lewica wants to remove Articles 196 (offence against religious feelings) and 212 (defamation) from the Penal Code. Since 2015, PiS has changed the management at institutions such as the National Museum in Warsaw, the Centre for

Contemporary Art, Zachęta, the Museum of Art in Łódź and the Old Theatre in Kraków. In its programme, meanwhile, it announces further centralisation measures - it wants to establish the National Institute of Visual Arts, which would pursue a policy of grants, scholarships and finance art purchases.

**Parties also differ on digital issues.** Lewica wants to quickly amend the Copyright Act to implement the EU DSM Directive (on copyright and related rights in the digital single market), which would allow artists to collect royalties for publishing works online. The deadline for implementation was June 2021, but the government's work on the matter froze in April 2023; PiS does not mention the issue in its programme either. European Commission has already sued Warsaw's at CJEU for the delay. The artists harmed by the delay accuse the government of acting in favour of foreign corporations that benefit from it. Earlier, the Polish government had challenged the DSM at the CJEU, which dismissed the complaint.

## THE BOTTOM LINE

Minister Piotr Gliński's actions have antagonised the arts community like few others. The opposition's proposals (with the exception of Konfederacja, whose only demand is the abolition of the Ministry of Culture) respond to its main problems, and its victory is eagerly awaited by the vast majority of the community. It would, for example, give a chance for a law offering insurance to artists. A continuation of the PiS government would mean further centralisation, as well as a focus on the past, the defence of Poland's good name and religious feelings. It would also further strengthen the position of artists and groups who felt marginalised before 2015.

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