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KRAKÓW VOTES INDEPENDENT AND RESHUFFLES THE CARDS AMID 2027



On 11 October 2026, the independent Łukasz Gibała won the Kraków mayoral run-off with 62.1% of the vote, defeating Monika Piątkowska, the joint candidate of Donald Tusk's Civic Coalition (KO) and the Polish People's Party (PSL), on a turnout of 44.3%. The early election followed May's recall referendum, in which KO mayor Aleksander Miszański was removed amid accusations of cronyism and poor financial management. For Gibała, a self-funded businessman, it was a fourth attempt and a first victory; he framed it as Kraków residents knowing better than "politicians in Warsaw".

The result is not without significance for the government. Kraków is a large, educated, pro-European city of the kind that forms the core of Tusk's electorate, and the Prime Minister invested personally in the campaign. A 24-point defeat there, a year before the parliamentary elections, shows that the KO brand alone no longer guarantees victory, even on friendly ground.

The opposition has been quick to present the outcome as a verdict on the government, and a further recall referendum in Częstochowa will keep the theme of local discontent alive. Above all, the result confirms a weakness that national polls already show: Tusk's partners are fragile. PSL and Polska 2050 both poll below the 5% threshold, so KO's lead as a party does not automatically translate into a governing majority.

Three factors suggest that Kraków is a local event rather than a national turning point.

First, the winner is not from the right. Gibała is an independent who campaigned on city finances, public transport, short-term rentals and cronyism in the town hall. Right-wing figures welcomed his victory, but he is not aligned with them, and his voters cannot be counted as a reserve for PiS or Konfederacja.

Second, the vote punished a local incumbent. The election was triggered by a referendum against a specific mayor, after 24 years of the same political camp running the city. It was a judgement on Kraków's administration more than on the national government.

Third, national polls tell a different story. In September surveys, KO led every other party by 11 to 15 points, with between 26 and 31% of the vote, well ahead of PiS at 15 to 19% and Konfederacja at 13 to 15%.

The decisive factor for 2027 is less Kraków than the state of the Polish right, which is now split into four parties with very different profiles.

Jarosław Kaczyński's PiS, polling between 15 and 19%, remains the largest of them, but it has taken a harder national-conservative line since its split. Konfederacja, led by Krzysztof Bosak and Sławomir

Mentzen, combines libertarian economics with nationalism and stands at 13 to 15%. Grzegorz Braun's Korona represents the radical, anti-Ukrainian and anti-system fringe, with around 7% and falling. Finally, Mateusz Morawiecki's Rozwój Plus, which broke away from PiS in July 2026, occupies the moderate centre-right and polls between 4 and 6%.

On paper, these parties together match or exceed the governing bloc. In practice, a common government is hard to imagine. Morawiecki left PiS precisely over its hard-right turn, and it is difficult to see him governing alongside Braun, whose recent provocations against Ukraine drew condemnation from Kyiv and a criminal investigation in Poland. Braun, for his part, is fielding Senate candidates in all 100 constituencies, a sign that he does not intend to cooperate. Relations between PiS and Morawiecki's group, whose 40 parliamentarians were expelled in August, remain bitter.

Seat projections show the problem clearly: PiS, Konfederacja and Braun together fall short of the 231 seats needed. The right reaches a majority only with Rozwój Plus, the partner least willing to sit with Braun.

Kraków is an embarrassment for Tusk, but not a turning point. As long as the right remains divided into four camps with incompatible leaders, KO has a real chance of staying in power, either as the largest party leading a renewed coalition or by benefiting from the right's inability to agree on a government.

That outcome is far from certain. Tusk's own path to a majority is narrow: his centrist partners risk falling out of parliament, and Morawiecki has categorically ruled out governing with him. Three questions will decide 2027: whether PSL and Polska 2050 clear the threshold or merge, whether Rozwój Plus survives as an independent force, and whether further local revolts such as Częstochowa turn into a national mood against the government.

Summary: Łukasz Gibała's clear victory in Kraków is a symbolic setback for Donald Tusk, inflicted in a city that should have been safe ground for his party. Yet the vote was above all a local revolt against a discredited town hall, won by an independent who does not belong to the right. Nationally, KO still leads the polls comfortably, while the right is split into four parties whose leaders are unlikely to govern together. Unless that division is overcome, Tusk keeps a real chance of remaining in power after 2027, even if his path to a majority stays narrow.