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## PO-PiS agreement in the 2002 local government elections on the example of the podkarpackie voivodship

**Abstract:** The cognitive objective of the article was to analyse the agreement concluded between PO and PiS before the local government elections on a macro level (as a general concept of agreement between two political entities) and micro level (related to the sphere of influence of this coalition in the Podkarpackie voivodeship). Taking these levels into account made it possible to determine the way in which the coalition was concluded, together with all its consequences, while at the level of the voivodeship in question it was used to determine the course of the negotiation process and the effects of the local elections on PO-PiS.

**Key words:** Civic Platform, Law and Justice, local elections, electoral competition, podkarpackie voivodship

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### Introduction

The process of inter-party rivalry determining the Polish political scene abounded in a variety of interactions, including numerous integration and decomposition processes. These were particularly evident in the 1990s, through the consolidation in the political consciousness of the dichotomous division into “post-Solidarity” and “post-Polshevik” parties, which changed dramatically with the 2001 parliamentary elections (Grabowska, 2004; Bojarowicz, 2018; Obacz, 2018, *passim*).

This election was the last in which the aforementioned division reflecting the “historical conditions” of the electorate’s voting preferences played a significant role (Antoszewski, 2009, p. 13). The emergence of the new parties, particularly Civic Platform (PO) and Law and Justice (PiS), referring to a “post-Solidarity” origin and a centre-right orientation, was based on criticism of both the entire political system (PiS) and the political elite of the time (PO) (Maj, 2014, pp. 32–34). PO and PiS also had in common the identification of an enemy in the form of the Democratic Left Alliance (SLD) together with the incumbent President of the Republic of Poland, Aleksander Kwasniewski. As Igor Janke pointed out, the opponent was clearly identified and the dispute defined – for many Poles the left-wing camp symbolised “the remnants of the communist regime, the system, the Warsaw salon” (Janke, 2009, pp. 80–81). This strategy was successfully implemented in the years 2001–2005, when PO and PiS cooperated as parties in opposition. Such actions were a natural consequence of the parliamentary election result, which translated into the political structure of the newly elected Sejm. The cooperation of PO and PiS in the 4th Sejm was evident, for example, in the vote of no-confidence for Mr Miller (together with the League of Polish Families – further referred to as the LPR

– and three non-attached MPs) and identically towards Marek Belka's first and second government; the joint tabling of a resolution on the establishment of a National Day for Life – together with the Polish People's Party – further referred to as the PSL – and the LPR – in August 2004, or a similar initiative calling on the Council of Ministers to repeal the resolution of the Council of Ministers of 23 March 2004 on granting consent to the signing of an agreement between the governments of Poland, the Czech Republic and Germany on the construction of a road link in the Neisse Euroregion, in the area between the towns of Bogatynia in Poland, Hradek nad Nisou in the Czech Republic and Zittau in Germany of October 2004 (Similat, 2012, pp. 82–129).

The PO-PiS parliamentary cooperation has not always been harmonious. Careful observation of the legislative process from 2001 to 2005 provided a number of interesting insights into the mutual blocking of resolutions and bills submitted separately by these political entities. Nonetheless, the two parties came closer to each other in their early days, especially at the time of their organisational development.

The study focused on the verification of the research hypothesis according to which the interests of provincial negotiators were more important than the common – for PO-PiS – achieving electoral success on a national scale. The following questions were used to realise the research objective: which actors, apart from PO-PiS, were interested and involved in the coalition talks and what were their arrangements? What were the consequences of the local elections for the PO-PiS coalition in the Podkarpackie Voivodeship?

The research was based on evoked sources, i.e. interviews conducted with local political decision-makers of the time, as well as on an extensive search for sources conducted, among others, at the PO headquarters in Warsaw, the Independent Self-Governing Trade Union "Solidarność" (NSZZ) in Rzeszów or at the headquarters of the National League association in Częstochowa. Some materials were obtained from the archives of the Law and Justice party in Warsaw, as well as from direct participants in the described events.<sup>1</sup>

### **PO-PiS negotiations in 2002 at central level**

The positioning of PO and PiS as opposition parties in the fourth-term Sejm, as well as the identification of a common enemy, allowed the two political entities to become closer. This interdependence became all the more serious the sooner the leaders of both groupings realised that SLD (and to some extent PSL and the Labour Union – further UP – as formations co-participating in the exercise of power), taking advantage of the so-called "popularity wave" generated by the 2001 parliamentary elections, could be successful again in the forthcoming local elections in 2002. This threat became all the more real in view of the fact that a significant number of polls conducted by opinion polling centres unequivocally indicated a high level of support for the government coalition of the time (Kolarska-Bobińska, 2002, pp. 10–11).

A distinctive feature of the negotiations conducted between the leaders of PO and PiS regarding the future agreement was the proposal to create a broad centre-right bloc

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<sup>1</sup> The documents marked in the article below as Law and Justice Archive are from a researcher who carried out a search for sources at the party's headquarters in Warsaw, but requested anonymity due to the nature of the data provided.

bringing together both political parties and local government circles for the local government elections. This concept emerged in connection with the establishment in November 2001 of a social movement referring to Catholic social teaching and the Christian system of values called the Social Initiative “Wspólnota Samorządowa”, whose main organisational core was the local government association Liga Krajowa, headed by Tadeusz Wrona, grouping councillors, mayors and city presidents elected in the 1998 elections from the list of the Electoral Action “Solidarity” (AWS) (Szczepański, 2022, pp. 79–90).

The leaders of the “Wspólnota Samorządowa”, i.e. T. Wrona, Antoni Jankowski (district Governor of Tarnogórski and president of the Association of Polish Counties), Jerzy Jedliński (deputy mayor of Kraków and secretary of the Association of Polish Cities), Marek Nawara (marshal of the Małopolskie Voivodeship) and Jan Olbrycht (marshal of the Śląskie Voivodeship) addressed a broad offer of cooperation not only to Jarosław Kaczyński (PiS) and Maciej Płażyński (PO), but also to Artur Balazs (Conservative and People’s Party – New Poland Movement); Władysław Frasyniuk (Freedom Union); Roman Giertych (League of Polish Families); Mieczysław Janowski (AWS Social Movement); and Kazimierz Michał Ujazdowski (Przymierze Prawicy) (Archiwum Ligi Krajowej – further: ALK, *Listy liderów Wspólnoty Samorządowej liderów polskich partii politycznych* – see bibliography). Due to the lack of cooperation with the leaders of the aforementioned parties, the results of the interviews conducted were limited only to representatives of PO and PiS (Kapsa, Wrona, 2021, pp. 261–264).

According to documents obtained from the office of the National League in Częstochowa, it appears that the leaders of the “Wspólnota Samorządowa” met with J. Kaczyński on 7 March 2002 and with M. Płażyński on 15 March 2002. These talks took place in a courteous atmosphere. J. Kaczyński found the presented proposal to establish a broad centre-right electoral committee interesting, but at the very beginning of the conversation the PiS politician set specific conditions. He demanded that in 11 cities (Warsaw, Łódź, Krakow, Wrocław, Poznań, Gdańsk, Szczecin, Bydgoszcz, Lublin, Białystok and Katowice) candidates for mayor should be put forward, to be agreed between PiS, PO and “Wspólnota Samorządowa”, and in 3 or 4 of these cities, these would be exclusively candidates from PiS (*Spotkanie z J. Kaczyńskim w jego biurze poselskim*, 7.03.2002, p. 1).

J. Kaczyński’s proposals for the nomination of candidates for mayors in the above-mentioned 11 cities were conditioned by their definition in the electoral manual prepared in January 2002 for the local elections, according to which all actions undertaken during the electoral campaign were to be carried out on the basis of the principles of PiS unity and joint implementation of the programme (Archiwum Prawa i Sprawiedliwości w Warszawie – further: APiS, *Instrukcja wyborcza*, 11.01.2002, p. 1).

Further conditions on which J. Kaczyński was keen were the definition of the programme principles, the intention to cooperate, as well as the financing of the electoral committee. This information, even in its preliminary outline, was needed by the President of the Law and Justice party before the Law and Justice political council to be held two days later in order to present the above proposal. Due to ongoing negotiations with PO, no binding decisions were taken at that time.

In turn, the President of the PO stated that between March and May 2002 no political party leader would declare his participation in the proposed venture due to the constantly

changing election polls. From this perspective, as the PO politician assessed, both in the provinces and in the big cities, the party signboard was better perceived than a broad cross-party coalition (ALK, *Spotkanie Przewodniczącego PO Macieja Płażyńskiego z reprezentantami Wspólnoty Samorządowej*, 15.03.2002, p. 1). The notes of T. Wrona show that M. Płażyński offered the leaders of “Wspólnota” to be the ones to join the committee that might be formed from PiS. The politician stated: “We probably won’t convince you of the name PiS, Platform and something else. Today the PiS PO concept seems the best to me, but we don’t know yet. We are trying to convince PiS to go together in the elections in big cities and provinces. Where we don’t have leaders, we will support leaders from the centre-left (cites Uszok and Janowski).<sup>2</sup> At the provincial level, we would like a PO PiS arrangement and to include others” (ALK, *Spotkanie Przewodniczącego PO Macieja Płażyńskiego z reprezentantami Wspólnoty Samorządowej*, 15.03.2002, p. 1).

From the information provided by M. Płażyński and noted by T. Wrona, it can be deduced that it was more likely that agreements were concluded by the leaders of the “Wspólnota Samorządowa” in large urban agglomerations or simply at the level of voivodships, where there were strong local government arrangements. In the end, M. Płażyński, despite his declaration to consult the leaders of the “Wspólnota Samorządowa” on a monthly basis, did not undertake further cooperation at the central level. J. Kaczyński did the same, who probably decided that from the point of view of the ongoing talks with PO, it would be more important to promote the banners of both parties than to support the former AWS environment and its direct heir in the form of the AWS Social Movement.<sup>3</sup>

Talks on the joint participation of PO-PiS in the local elections were conducted in two dimensions: an informal one, preceding official party positions in the period from February to April 2002, and a formal one, i.e. after their approval by the central authorities from April to June 2002. These meetings, due to their working nature, were confidential and to this day little is known about them. They took place between M. Płażyński and J. Kaczyński among their closest associates. They were officially crowned on 13 June 2002 with the signing of a joint agreement. Its signatories were empowered representatives of the Political Committee of the Law and Justice Party: L. Kaczyński (President), J. Kaczyński (Chairman of the Law and Justice Party’s Main Board), Kazimierz Ujazdowski (Vice-President of the Law and Justice Party), as well as M. Płażyński (Chairman of the PO) and Grzegorz Schetyna (Secretary of the PO).

The document indicated the objectives behind the politically motivated cooperation. These were: 1) the renewal of local self-government and the healing of the policy pursued by local self-government; 2) ensuring a high level of competence related to the electivity of local self-government authorities; 3) curbing the abuse of public posts for private gain and eliminating other pathological phenomena; 4) preparing local self-government for the challenges facing Poland’s accession to the European Union; and 5) stopping the SLD’s construction of a party-based state. This unequivocally neg-

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<sup>2</sup> This remark referred to Piotr Uszok and Mieczysław Janowski.

<sup>3</sup> The AWS milieu centred on the “Wspólnota Samorządowa” in its initial phase, especially after the 2002 elections, considered the possibility of creating a local government party, which ultimately did not materialise (Szczepeński, 2023, pp. 123–131).

ative stance towards the SLD appeared in yet another point of the collation agreement, in which a commitment was made not to enter into political coalitions with the SLD, as well as with the Self-Defence of the Republic of Poland, and to harmonious cooperation between the elected representatives throughout the 2002–2006 term of office (APiS, *Uchwała nr 2 Rady Politycznej*, 13.04.2002, p. 1; *Uchwała nr 6/11/2002 Zarządu Głównego*, 6.11.2002, p. 1).

The signatories of the agreement also undertook to present joint programme proposals and to issue agreed lists of candidates in the elections to the provincial assemblies. Detailed regulations concerned, *inter alia*, keeping the proportions of 50% of the candidates indicated by both PO and PiS; agreements concerning the first places on the electoral lists consisting in the indication that in half of the electoral districts the first candidate on the list was to be the person indicated by PO, and in half – by PiS. In addition, the Regional Boards of both parties were to determine in which constituencies the leader of the list was to be chosen by the coalition partner, while in the case of towns with more than 100,000 inhabitants it was specified that the principle of taking places on the list in turn by a representative of both parties was to apply. In the absence of an agreement, all decisions were to be taken by the central boards of PO and PiS. The most expressive provision of the agreement was the point referring to the lack of validity of the coalition in the Mazowieckie Voivodeship, where both parties put up their own candidates competing for the office of the Mayor of the Capital City of Warsaw, and also in the Podkarpackie Voivodeship, where it was agreed to expand the PO-PiS alliance with other political entities and circles.

The formalisation of the terms of the agreement between PO and PiS did not discourage members of “Wspólnota Samorządowa” from making further appeals to the leaders of political parties – both at central and provincial level. In July 2002, the plenipotentiary of the Social Initiative in Warsaw – Lech Isakiewicz, sent a letter to J. Kaczyński reiterating his appeal for joint pre-election action. In this document, he emphasised that the Social Initiative recognised the Law and Justice party as its most important political partner and pledged to help create lists of candidates for all levels of local government. These lists would be constructed under the common banner of PiS – “Wspólnota Samorządowa”. As an example of such cooperation functioning at the provincial level, L. Isakiewicz gave the examples of Wielkopolska and Podkarpacie. At the same time, the author of the letter proposed a verification and screening procedure for all candidates on the lists of such a committee, and an argument for the possible commencement of cooperation between the Law and Justice party and “Wspólnota Samorządowa” was to be the possible support of Lech Kaczyński as a candidate for President of Warsaw (ALK, Isakiewicz, 30.07.2002, p. 1). This letter remained unanswered.

The verification procedure mentioned by L. Isakiewicz was identical to the measures taken by the Law and Justice party in the 2001 parliamentary elections and intended to be implemented before the next election in 2002. In accordance with the electoral instructions already cited, each PiS candidate was obliged to fill in a specially prepared questionnaire, on the basis of which PiS candidates were admitted to the electoral lists. These were assessed by the provincial verification commissions, while in the case of candidates running for a seat in the provincial assembly and for the post of mayor, the candidates were reviewed by the central verification commission.

Talks along the lines of PO-PiS and “Wspólnota Samorządowa” were not the only ones conducted at central level. The process of “unifying the right” before the local elections involved the chairman of the Right Alliance, Kazimierz Michał Ujazdowski, and the chairman of the political council, Marek Jurek, with whom PiS undertook unification activities (APiS, *Uchwała nr 4 Kongresu Założycielskiego PiS*, 1.12.2001, p. 1). These ended with the merger of the two parties on 2 June 2002 (thanks to which the PiS was joined by only 800 of the 2200 members representing the Przymierze Prawicy), and then with the election of M. Jurek as President of the Regional Board of the PiS in the Podkarpacie Region (during the 1st Regional Congress of the PiS in Rzeszów on 28 June 2002) (Biblioteka Sejmowa w Warszawie, *teczka Prawo i Sprawiedliwość*, sygn. I073/01, *Umowa o połączeniu Prawa i Sprawiedliwości z Przymierzem Prawicy*, Warszawa 24.04.2002, pp. 1–5; Klimczak, 2.07.2002, p. 5).

Subsequent entities with which both the unification of the right wing and the joint display of electoral lists were negotiated were the LPR and the NSZZ “Solidarność”. In both cases, the talks were led by J. Kaczyński and concerned the creation of a joint broad coalition with the LRP and the union’s merger with the Law and Justice Party. As the chairman of the PiS Executive Board assessed, there was no problem of unification on the right, only of its quality (and, *PiS chce zjednoczenia prawicy*, 10.04.2002, p. 4). Ultimately, the LRP decided to participate in the elections on its own, while the NSZZ Solidarność trade union, not wanting to lose its own identity and autonomy at the same time, did not join the PiS. Its members will eventually populate the electoral lists of at least several political entities (including the “Wspólnota Samorządowa”, LPR, PO and PiS).

On a national scale, the PO-PiS coalition won a total of 12.11% of the votes in the elections to the provincial assemblies, introducing only 79 representatives, which was only the fourth result, after SLD-UP, Self-Defence and LPR. The committee won the largest number of seats in the Pomorskie Voivodeship (14), and identically in the Małopolskie and Śląskie Voivodeships (10) (Nikolski, 2011, pp. 91–92). In many voivodeships (including the Pomorskie, Małopolskie and Lubelskie Voivodeships), PO-PiS entered into a coalition with the LPR, but from the point of view of the durability of the agreement reached, it should be mentioned that in most voivodeships, PO-PiS clubs did not survive to the end of the term in 2006.

### **PO-PiS agreement in the Podkarpackie voivodeship**

Talks on possible cooperation at the level of the Podkarpackie Voivodeship began at the turn of November/December 2001 and were of a confidential nature, conducted between the then Chairman of the Board of the Podkarpackie Region PO Jan Tomaka and the provincial plenipotentiary of the Law and Justice party in Podkarpacie Marek Kuchciński, and then continued at parliamentary level, where meetings between the above-mentioned politicians were more frequent. These negotiations led to the establishment of working teams in February 2002, the main aim of which was to prepare joint electoral lists.<sup>4</sup> It is worth noting at this point that these talks were conducted before the

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<sup>4</sup> At the time, it was formed by J. Tomaka and M. Kuchciński.

official agreements of the central authorities of the two parties, which were only officially approved in April 2002. As a result of the unification of the Law and Justice Alliance, the President of the Regional Board of the Law and Justice Party, Marek Jurek, joined the talks at the level of the Podkarpackie Voivodship.

Already at the very beginning of the negotiations, the different directions of the postulated integration concepts became apparent. They resulted mainly from individual decisions of local political actors dictated by care for the support of their own environment and obtaining the best possible electoral result for them. It is worth emphasising that as a result of the continuation of the talks, steps were taken to broaden the originally envisaged electoral agreement. For the purposes of the following considerations, the directions of the course of negotiations were reduced to five configurations: 1) the PO-PiS-LPR agreement as a concept presented by J. Tomaka; 2) the PO-PiS-LPR-SKL-RNP coalition, whose promoter remained M. Kuchciński; 3) the PiS-Klub Senat 2001-LPR agreement and the Subcarpathian structures of the NSZZ "Solidarność", whose author was M. Jurek; 4) the agreement of the right within the framework of the local "round table" postulated by members of the Social Initiative "Wspólnota Samorządowa" in Podkarpacie and the local and provincial structures of the NSZZ "Solidarność"; and 5) the clear support and involvement of representatives of the Catholic Church in Rzeszów.<sup>5</sup>

The integration concepts of the PO milieu represented by J. Tomaka oscillated around those political formations which, as new entities, found themselves in the 4th Sejm (excluding, of course, Samoobrona) and which were numerous in the Podkarpackie Voivodeship. This politician believed that the possible electoral alliance with the two largest political parties was to constitute not only his political strength and effectiveness, but above all to enable him to gain an independent majority in the Podkarpackie Voivodship Assembly (Wywiad z Janem Tomaką, 23.03.2022). In turn, according to M. Kuchciński's assumptions, it was necessary to create the broadest possible electoral committee which would not only seriously weaken the chances of parties such as SLD or Samoobrona, but above all politically strengthen the Podkarpackie Voivodeship according to the right-wing electoral sympathies of its inhabitants. This concept envisaged cooperation between PiS and not only PO or LPR, but also with SKL-RNP representatives. M. Jurek's vision of right-wing integration was somewhat different. This politician was a firm opponent of forming electoral alliances with the Platform. In his opinion, the differences between Law and Justice and Civic Platform should not be blurred; additionally, he opted for ideologically close formations, referring in their programme output to Christian values and the teachings of the Catholic Church. At the same time, he strongly criticised the "leftovers" from AWS, which he considered at the time to be "out of control" and "splitting local interests" (Wywiad z Markiem Jurkiem, 7.03.2022). M. Jurek's attitude towards these groupings was dictated primarily by fears of obstructing decisions

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<sup>5</sup> The fifth configuration that was left out were the talks conducted in parallel alongside PO and PiS by the LPR (represented by the leader of the Podkarpackie structures Zygmunt Wrzodak, party plenipotentiary Tadeusz Skowron and MPs Ewa Maria Kantor and Halina Murias) and the Christian National Union (led by its president Stanisław Zajac, vice-president Zdzisław Pupa and members of the Podkarpacie Regional Board of the ZChN Zdzisław Banat and Bogdan Rzońca). Despite numerous negotiations and appeals for joint unity before the local elections, the parties ultimately failed to cooperate (ar, 8.01.2002, p. 2).

on potential electoral alliances, as well as the possible sharing of the fate of the former AWS, i.e. another decomposition of right-wing circles (Wywiad z Markiem Jurkiem, 7.03.2022).

Confirmation of the above-mentioned integration directions was the Action Plan for the pre-campaign of local government elections in the Podkarpacie region by M. Jurek sent at the beginning of March 2002 to the NSZZ “Solidarność” headquarters in Rzeszów. In this document M. Jurek opted for the establishment of the Patronal Porozumiewawczy Komitet Środowisk Prawicowych Podkarpacia, which was to include: “(interested) Subcarpathian senators of the Senat 2001 Club, Subcarpathian deputies of the League of Polish Families and Law and Justice Clubs, presidents of the regional Solidarity Management Boards”, as well as the then Speaker of the Sejm Stanisław Zajac, who was bestowed with the greatest trust in his constituency in the 2001 parliamentary elections (Archiwum NSZZ “Solidarność” w Rzeszowie, *Plan działania w prekampanii* III, 2002, p. 1). This plan ultimately did not materialise.

In the case of the fourth integration concept, Subcarpathian politicians gathered in the Social Initiative “Wspólnota Samorządowa” advocated the creation of a broad electoral alliance within the framework of a local “round table” (Szczepański, 2022, pp. 176–195). This initiative was supported by the authorities of the local and voivodship structures of NSZZ “Solidarność”, which, after a joint meeting on 1 February 2002 in Rzeszów, issued the *Position of the Interregional Coordination Team of NSZZ “Solidarność” in Podkarpackie Voivodship concerning local government elections 2002*, calling on the leaders of political parties, associations, organisations and local government circles to “abandon the formation of their own election committees, and due to the overriding interest of the voivodship and local communities, to form a single committee for local government elections” (Archiwum NSZZ “Solidarność” w Rzeszowie, *Stanowisko Międzyregionalnego Zespołu Koordynacyjnego*, 1.02.2002, p. 1). This appeal was addressed to parliamentarians from the Law and Justice party, the LPR, the PO and senators from the Senate 2001 Club.<sup>6</sup> As a consequence of the action taken, PO and PiS cooperated with the leaders of the Social Initiative “Wspólnota Samorządowa” to form a single committee called “Podkarpacie Razem”. Such a declaration appeared already at the beginning of March 2002 (Zbiory Jana Tomaki, *Komunikat*, 11.03.2002, p. 1).

The latter integration postulate concerned the involvement of the church in the process of unification of the right wing. On the “express order” of the then Bishop of Rzeszów, Kazimierz Górny, priests Stanisław Slowik (then director of Caritas of the Rzeszów Diocese) and Ireneusz Folcik (parish priest of St Joseph’s parish in Rzeszów and dean of the Rzeszów-Północ deanery) were delegated to undertake discussions with the leaders of the political party structures in the Podkarpacie region (Interview with priest Ireneusz Folcik on 26.03.2002; Interview with priest Stanisław Slowik on 28.03.2002). With their participation, a number of meetings were organised at St Joseph’s parish with

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<sup>6</sup> The appeal was signed by: Waldemar Cieśla (chairman of the Regional Board of NSZZ “Solidarność” Małopolska in Dębica), Andrzej Kaczmarek (chairman of the Regional Board of NSZZ “Solidarność” Sandomierz Land), Andrzej Buczek (chairman of the Regional Board of NSZZ “Solidarność” Przemyska Land), Tadeusz Majchrowicz (chairman of the Regional Board of NSZZ “Solidarność” Podkarpacie in Krosno) and Wojciech Buczak (chairman of the Regional Board of NSZZ “Solidarność” in Rzeszów).



representatives of political parties, associations, social organisations and the local structures of the Solidarity Trade Union. According to a note prepared by priest I. Folicik, both priests led prayers and gave short introductions to the topics of the discussions undertaken. This concerned both matters related to the scope of the Church's social doctrine and the question of "practical steps towards the formation of a joint preparatory committee" (*List Księdza Pralata Stanisława Słowika*, 5.03.2002, p. 1). Participants in these meetings, recalled years later that the level of involvement of the priests went far beyond the framework presented. It was in the face of such multifaceted, sometimes mutually exclusive integration proposals that it came to be decided by local PO and PiS politicians about a possible electoral agreement.

As early as March 2002, it was reported that as a result of a meeting between M. Kuchciński, J. Tomaka and Stanisław Ożóg representing the "Wspólnota Samorządowa" a preliminary declaration of cooperation was signed for the forthcoming elections. Importantly, a significant part of the members of this Community were representatives of trade unions, which was to additionally constitute the strength of the created electoral agreement. The political agreement between PiS, PO and Wspólnota was signed on 8 August 2002. Its signatories were: M. Kuchciński and Robert Kultys (PiS), J. Tomaka, Elżbieta Łukacijewska and Krystyna Skowrońska (PO), as well as Władysław Ortyl and S. Ożóg ("Wspólnota Samorządowa") (*Zbiory Jana Tomaki, Porozumienie w sprawie wyborów samorządowych*, 8.08.2002, p. 3). The parties then undertook to conduct local government activities with a sense of responsibility for the Polish *raison d'état* and the Christian identity of the Polish nation, based on the principles of subsidiarity and social solidarity; and to counteract all forms of corruption and nepotism; reducing social and economic disparities in Podkarpackie, taking care of the voivodship's assets, such as agriculture, industry and tourism (*Zbiory Jana Tomaki, Porozumienie w sprawie wyborów samorządowych*, 8.08.2002, p. 1).

Despite the signing of the agreement by the aforementioned parties, cooperation with the LPR was still sought, but the chairman of this party in the Podkarpackie Voivodship, Zygmunt Wrzodak, taking advantage of the popularity his formation gained in the 2001 parliamentary elections, as well as the support given to this environment by Father Tadeusz Rydzyk Toruń radio station, refused to participate in the planned undertaking. Not even the personal intervention that M. Jurek undertook with Marek Kotlinowski and Roman Giertych.<sup>7</sup>

In addition to the "Wspólnota Samorządowa", we managed to convince senators from the Podkarpackie region from the Senat 2001 Club, Mieczysław Janowski and Janina Sagatowska; Stanisław Zajac (ZChN) to participate in the elections together, as part of a coalition with PO-PiS; the chairman of Catholic Action of the Rzeszów diocese, Jeremi Kalkowski, and the chairman of Catholic Action of the Przemyśl archdiocese, Piotr Stańko; the chairman of NSZZ "Solidarność" in Rzeszów, Wojciech Buczak; the head of the Chmielnik commune, Kazimierz Jaworski, and one representative of the LPR,

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<sup>7</sup> During the negotiating period, LPR leaders at both central and provincial levels encouraged Law and Justice representatives to break off cooperation with PO. This was one of the conditions that made cooperation possible. As reported by Ewa Maj and Czesław Maj, on 22 August 2002, the party's authorities appealed for unity among right-wing, patriotic, national and independence circles in the local elections (Maj, Maj, 2007, p. 254).

Ryszard Kędra.<sup>8</sup> As early as 2 September 2002, the formation of an electoral committee called “Podkarpacie Razem” was officially announced, where it was announced that it would renounce party banners. The adopted declaration stated: “what is important is the good of the whole local community and to this good we want to submit ourselves in the name of the Catholic identity of our region” (Archiwum NSZZ “Solidarność”, “Podkarpacie Razem”, 2.09.2002, p. 1).

The committee formed in this way, as announced earlier, competed for seats in the assembly of the Podkarpackie Voivodeship, as well as for the Rzeszów powiat council. On the scale of the entire voivodeship, a PO-PiS coalition committee was formed only in Rzeszów, where its candidates competed for seats on the city council. A common candidate for the office of Mayor of Rzeszów was also agreed on, with MP J. Tomaka.<sup>9</sup> According to polls published in the local press, the PO-PiS committee in the capital of the Podkarpackie Voivodeship could count on 31% of the votes, and the presidential candidate J. Tomaka will go through to the second round of voting, where he will most likely face the SLD representative, Tadeusz Ferenc (Kuca, 28.08.2002, p. 3; saj, 15.10.2002, p. 3).

In the local government elections held on 27 October 2002, the “Podkarpacie Razem” committee won a total of 7 out of 33 seats (15.37% of the vote) in the voivointerwdship assembly and came only second, losing to the LPR, which won 9 seats (22.86% of the vote).<sup>10</sup> The lack of agreement – both before and after the elections – led to the formation of a coalition formed by PSL-SLD-Samoobrona RP and UP, which had a total of 17 seats and therefore only a one-vote advantage (Koziełło, 2017, pp. 76–77). In the case of the elections to the Rzeszów County Council, the “Podkarpacie Razem” committee obtained a minimal majority winning 15 out of 29 seats.

There was a significant complication in the competition for the office of mayor, in which the Bishop of Rzeszów, K. Górny, became directly involved, withdrawing his unofficial support for J. Tomaka and directing it towards the then mayor, Andrzej Szlachta, who was seeking re-election and running as a member of the Rzeszowskie Porozumienie Prawicy Committee. According to the interviews, the main decision-maker behind the change in this support was the Chmielnik municipality mayor, K. Jaworski, who was also one of the signatories of the “Podkarpacie Razem” committee (Wywiad z Kazimierzem Jaworskim, 28.03.2022). When asked to comment on the matter, this politician stated that this was an individual decision by the bishop. It is only worth recalling that both J. Tomaka and A. Szlachta stood no chance in the election, which was won in the second round by T. Ferenc with 51.63% of the vote (Drzonek, 2013, pp. 313–315).

<sup>8</sup> The participation of this politician in the electoral agreement signed by PO-PiS and „Wspólnota Samorządowa” was perceived by the LPR authorities solely as an individual decision by R. Kędra.

<sup>9</sup> The proposal for this candidacy came from PO, while PiS accepted it. Arrangements between the local leaders of both parties also resulted in the selection of a candidate for the post of vice-mayor of Rzeszów, who was to be Waldemar Szumny (Law and Justice). Cf. Social Life Documents Reading Room of the Provincial and Municipal Public Library in Rzeszów (Czytelnia Dokumentów Życia Społecznego Wojewódzkiej i Miejskiej Biblioteki Publicznej w Rzeszowie, *Ulotka wyborcza*, 2002, pp. 1–2).

<sup>10</sup> On behalf of the „Podkarpacie Razem” committee, the seats were given to: Piotr Babinetz (PiS), Krzysztof Kłak (SKL-RNP), Dariusz Kłeczek (PiS), Barbara Kuźniar Jabłczyńska (PO), Władysław Ortyl („Wspólnota Samorządowa”/RS AWS), Zbigniew Siczkoś (RS AWS) and Wiktor Stasiak (representing the former AWS).

## Conclusions

The research hypothesis posed at the beginning of the paper was verified negatively, as the issue of PO and PiS forming a joint agreement ultimately prevailed. The possibility of electoral success on a national scale was more important than the interests of the provincial negotiators, understood solely in terms of different integration concepts and actors with whom an electoral alliance was always intended.

The main actors interested in, and involved in, negotiations with PO and PiS in Podkarpacie were the “Wspólnota Samorządowa” and the church party, so actively supporting local policy-makers. It was with their participation that the electoral agreement was signed, which, despite its positive conclusion with the formation of a joint committee, did not achieve the spectacular success that had been hoped for. The failure to conclude an alliance with the LPR – both before and after the elections – resulted in the loss of power in the assembly of the Podkarpackie Voivodeship, poor results for the county council and defeat in the elections for mayor of the city of Rzeszów.<sup>11</sup>

The PO-PiS agreement was an interesting venture, and for at least several reasons. Firstly, it resulted from the programme proximity and cooperation that the two parties had undertaken after the 2001 parliamentary elections. Secondly, the working meetings of the leaders of the PO and PiS provincial structures initiated in the Podkarpacie region may have been a factor that eventually led to the initiation of talks at central level. Thirdly, the identification of a common political opponent in the form of the Democratic Left Alliance and Self-Defence was a common denominator for both PO and Law and Justice, as well as for local government circles concentrated within the Social Initiative “Wspólnota Samorządowa”, which, despite numerous appeals at the central level, eventually led to the signing of a common agreement on participation in the elections in two provinces (Podkarpackie and Wielkopolska).

The definite weaknesses of the electoral alliance thus formed were: 1) the duration of the talks, which, although at the central party level lasted five months, in the case of the Podkarpackie Voivodeship alone it was exactly twice as long, i.e. ten months; 2) the excessive number of entities with which pre-election integration was wanted to be carried out probably in order to maximally accumulate the votes of voters within one electoral list and to achieve the maximum good electoral result; 3) programmatic diversity making it difficult to reach a common compromise and, at the same time, party divisions (mainly on the PO-LPR and LPR-“Wspólnota Samorządowa” lines); 4) impermanence of the committee and then of the PO-PiS councillor clubs, which, as already mentioned, did not survive in this composition until the end of the council term. The aspirations of the leaders of both parties, the increase in support for PO, which won 15 seats (Law and Justice won half as many) from 2004 (i.e. from the elections to the European Parliament), and the subsequent clear increase in the poll ratings of both PO and Law and Justice were factors that strongly influenced the final break-up of the agreement thus formed and at the same time prevented the formation of a coalition for the 2005 parliamentary elections. The pre- and post-election period associated with the 2005 parliamentary

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<sup>11</sup> The LPR in Rzeszów fielded its own candidate for mayor, which was Elżbieta Dzierżak. In this election she won 8.35% of the votes and eventually came 3rd. The PO representative, J. Tomaka, then won % of the vote and came 5th.

election only intensified the factors mentioned above, while the presidential campaign in which L. Kaczyński and D. Tusk were running at the time finally ruled out any chance of a positive outcome. Tusk ultimately doomed any chance of forming a stable coalition.

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## **Porozumienie PO-PiS w wyborach samorządowych 2002 na przykładzie województwa podkarpackiego**

### **Streszczenie**

Celem poznawczym artykułu była analiza porozumienia zawartego pomiędzy PO i PiS przed wyborami samorządowymi na poziomie makro (jako ogólna koncepcja porozumienia między dwoma podmiotami politycznymi) i mikro (związanym ze strefą wpływów tej koalicji w województwie podkarpackim). Uwzględnienie tych poziomów pozwoliło określić sposób zawarcia koalicji wraz ze wszystkimi jego konsekwencjami, natomiast na poziomie województwa posłużyło do określenia przebiegu procesu i efektów wyborów samorządowych dla PO-PiS.

**Słowa kluczowe:** Platforma Obywatelska, Prawo i Sprawiedliwość, wybory samorządowe, rywalizacja wyborcza, województwo podkarpackie