

Snap | 23 September 2024

CZECH REPUBLIC

Ano movement gains in Czech regional elections

The ANO movement of Andrej Babis performed well in the Czech regional elections, while the five-party ruling coalition did not convince the voters



Former Czech prime minister and ANO leader, Andrej Babis

A warning to the ruling coalition

Czech regional elections have clear winners and losers. The ANO movement of Andrej Babis won in ten regions, just as it did four years ago. And that result sets it up well for the future. Given the comeback of the hard left, standing under the new brand Stacilo!, led by Katerina Konecna, along with the well-performing far-right SPD of Tomio Okamura and conservative Trikolora, it may well translate into more coalitions and governorships than previously.

With an eye on next year's parliamentary elections, there's a warning here for the parties in the governing coalition that ANO has gone from its long-standing 30% of the vote to 35%. The current willingness of both Stacilo! and the SPD to supply it with additional votes suggests it could do better than it did after the last parliamentary elections. While the ANO movement revolves around its boss, Andrej Babis, other faces were prominent this weekend, too, which could make ANO a more potent force in the general election.

The gap between the ANO movement and the parties of the ruling Spolu coalition is getting wider. The government seems to have communication issues and is often accused of not

explaining its policies more successfully. The Pirate Party had a terrible night and now has only three representatives in the regions instead of the original 99; its leader has resigned.

Still, when the parliamentary elections come, many disappointed supporters of the five-party coalition are likely to again lend their vote to the ruling parties under the assumption that anyone is better than Babis, Okamura, and Konecna. A year is a long time in politics, but we expect a close call between the ANO movement and the five-party coalition in next year's parliamentary election.

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