**DENMARK**

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# Liberals and right-wing populists losing support

Social democrats come out on top from local elections in Denmark

**The social democrats (*Socialdemokratiet*) managed to strengthen their position as Denmark´s strongest political force as expected during local elections. Both Liberals (*Venstre*) and the nationalist Danish party of the people (*Dansk Folkeparti*) saw their electorate shrink.**

By securing 32.4% of the vote, the social-democrats were able to increase the result by three percentage points in comparison to the last election in 2013 and remain the strongest political party on the local level. Big cities, including Copenhagen, and its surroundings proofed as the party´s stronghold delivering the most votes. The capital also re-elected its social-democratic major Frank Jensen. In contrast the liberal Venstre party by Prime Minister Løkke Rasmussen had to relinquish three percent of its vote leaving them with 23.1%. Nevertheless, the head of government labelled the result satisfactory.

**Nationalists lose their position as the third biggest party**

Both the conservatives (*Det Konservative Folkeparti*) and the nationalist-leaning Danish People´s Party (*Dansk Folkeparti*) were far off behind with only 8.8% each. While the conservatives gained 0.2%, the right-wing populists lost 1.2% of its votes stripping them off their position as the kingdom´s third biggest party. Nevertheless, Peter Skaarup, majority leader of the Danish People´s Party in the parliament, drew a satisfactory conclusion from the election. Although, a better result would have been desirable, the election has shown that a solid basis for the party is ingrained in almost all municipalities. Several parties and electoral coalitions came out of the election following the big four parties such as the red-green Unitylist (*Enhedslisten*) who convinced six percent of the electorate or the left-wing liberal party *Radikale Venstre* who attracted 4.5% of the votes.

**Regional differences apparent for all political forces**

Considering the regional proportions of the electoral results, wide differences appear along party lines. While the social-democrats showed strong results in the Copenhagen area, the island of Fünen, and the northern and eastern part of continental Denmark, the liberals secured Westland and Südjütland. The conservatives swept several electoral districts in Seeland and remained the most powerful political force in the northern region of Vesthimmerland, despite heavy losses. The socialist People´s party (*Socialistik Folkeparti*) increased their vote count eight times and finished first on the Langeland island in southern Denmark. However, on the national level they only received 5.7% of the votes. On the Island Seeland several local electoral coalitions were able to reach a majority in some municipalities. Overall, 3.2 Million Danes participated in the election resulting in a participation of 70.8%.

**Conclusions**

As expected, there were no major upsets during the election, as most gains or losses remained within the margin of one percentage point. While the social-democrats gained strength, both the liberals and the

Danish People´s party had to suffer losses, which however, they labelled as marginal. Time in the next weeks will tell whether the result will have any impact on Løkke Rasmussen´s minority government. Since September 2016 Rasmussen is leading a coalition government between the Liberal and the conservative party which is dependent on the People´s Party´s support in the parliament.