

LÁSZLÓ ANDOR
interviews GINTAUTAS PALUCKAS

Reconnecting with our core values to engage with people

László Andor: *The return of the Social Democratic Party of Lithuania (LSDP) to government is the result of greater efforts to rebuild the party. What did you need to do to achieve this?*

Gintautas Paluckas: The return of LSDP to government was achieved through a combination of strategic reforms and renewed engagement with the public. Firstly, the party focused on reconnecting with its core values, emphasising social justice, equality and welfare. Listening tours and consultations with citizens helped identify the most pressing issues facing communities. Internally, the party modernised its structure, promoting new leadership, youth engagement and a clearer vision for the future. Messaging was also refined to better communicate how the party's policies would address societal challenges, such as rising inequality, public health and access to education. Finally, LSDP strengthened its ground-level presence, engaging in local elections and community initiatives to rebuild trust and credibility.

LA: *LSDP did not win the European Parliament (EP) election in June in Lithuania, but won the parliamentary election. What explains the difference?*

GP: The discrepancy between the EP and parliamentary election results can be attributed to several factors. EP elections often have a lower voter turnout and a different voter base, focusing more on European-wide issues rather than domestic concerns. In contrast, parliamentary elections have higher engagement and are shaped more by national issues, such as healthcare, education and economic policy – areas where LSDP's platform resonates more strongly with the electorate. Additionally, LSDP's strategy for the parliamentary elections was more targeted, with stronger grassroots mobilisation, clearer messaging on social welfare and a more defined leadership presence. National elections often provide a platform for parties to showcase their vision for the future of the country, allowing LSDP to emphasise its competence in domestic governance.

LA: *You used to work at the municipal level. What was the most important experience you gained in city government that will also be useful at the national level?*

GP: Working at the municipal level provided valuable experience in understanding the immediate needs of citizens and the practical realities of public administration. Key lessons included the importance of direct communication with the public, the necessity for quick but thoughtful decision-making and the value of inclusive governance. Municipal work taught the importance of flexibility, as local issues such as infrastructure, waste management and public services require pragmatic solutions. This experience will be useful nationally, where policy decisions have a broader impact but still require local relevance. Understanding how policies affect communities directly will guide the design of national initiatives that are both effective and grounded in reality.

LA: *Coalition building is always a delicate issue. What opportunities does the new governing coalition bring to Lithuania?*

GP: The new governing coalition offers Lithuania an opportunity for stability, consensus-driven decision-making and a broader representation of the electorate's interests. By bringing together different political forces, the coalition can build a stronger mandate to pursue ambitious reforms in social welfare, education and economic development. It also encourages compromise and collaboration, which may lead to more sustainable and widely accepted policies. In a rapidly changing geopolitical environment, having a unified approach to foreign policy, energy security and EU affairs will strengthen Lithuania's position on the international stage. Additionally, coalition governance allows for greater public trust, as diverse perspectives are considered part of the decision-making process.

LA: *What will your government focus on most of all? What corrections does the development of Lithuania need in the coming years?*

GP: The government will prioritise social welfare, reducing inequality and fostering sustainable economic growth. Key focus areas include strengthening public healthcare, improving access to quality education and ensuring affordable housing for all citizens. Addressing demographic challenges, such as emigration and an ageing population, will be essential, and the government will aim to create more opportunities for youth and families to stay and thrive in Lithuania. The green transformation and digitalisation are also on the agenda, as Lithuania seeks to align with the EU's climate and technological objectives. The new government has also vowed to strengthen national businesses by reducing the administrative burden and creating a growth-oriented tax incentive system. These priorities require policy corrections in taxation, labour market regulations and public sector modernisation. By focusing on these areas, the government aims to create a fairer, greener and more competitive Lithuania.

LA: *How do you see the EU agenda developing in this five-year cycle? This question also relates to the next Lithuanian presidency of the EU, which will take place in 2027 under your premiership.*

GP: The EU agenda over the next five years will likely focus on three key themes: the green transition, digital transformation and geopolitical resilience. Climate action will remain a top priority, with the Fit for 55 package and decarbonisation targets shaping EU legislation. Digital sovereignty and technological innovation will also be central, as the EU seeks to strengthen its competitiveness in artificial intelligence, data governance and cybersecurity. Geopolitically, the EU will aim to enhance its strategic autonomy, especially in energy security and defence, in response to external threats. Lithuania's presidency in 2027 presents a major opportunity to lead on these issues, particularly in areas where Lithuania has expertise, such as energy independence and Eastern Partnership policy. The presidency will be a chance to showcase Lithuanian leadership in Europe while advancing national priorities within the EU agenda.

LA: *The Institute for Solidarity of LSDP is a relatively new member of FEPS (as an observer). What potential do you see for future cooperation between our think tanks?*

GP: The partnership with FEPS provides significant potential for joint research, knowledge sharing and policy innovation. By working together, the Institute for Solidarity can contribute Lithuanian perspectives to broader European debates on social justice, sustainability and democratic renewal. This cooperation can produce evidence-based policy recommendations, offering fresh perspectives on shared challenges like labour rights, the green transition and digital transformation. It also provides access to an extensive network of European progressive thinkers, researchers and policymakers. Over time, the relationship with FEPS can enhance the Institute for Solidarity's visibility, influence EU policy discussions, and create opportunities for joint events, publications and advocacy on European issues that matter most to Lithuania.