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## **CROATIA'S RULING PARTY CLINGS TO POWER**

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Croatias parliament elected a new speaker on Friday (5 May), in a sign the ruling conservative HDZ party may be able to form a new coalition and avoid a snap election after the collapse of its alliance with the centre-right Most (Bridge) party.

A snap election would only delay economic reforms needed to improve the investment environment and growth prospects in one of the European Unions weakest economies.

Parliament confirmed the nomination of the HDZs Gordan Jandroković as speaker after the party submitted 76 signatures in his favour, the minimum needed for a majority in the 151-seat house.

HDZ has 58 seats in parliament and received support from other parties and some independent deputies.

HDZ and Mosts alliance effectively broke down after Most supported the opposition in a no-confidence vote against Finance Minister Zdravko Marić held on Thursday (4 May).

Marić survived the motion by one vote and Most leader Bozo Petrov then resigned as parliament speaker.

Prime Minister and HDZ leader Andrej Plenković must now propose four new ministers to parliament to replace those from Most. A vote on those appointments, likely to take place early next month, will be a clear test of whether he has secured enough parliamentary support.

My idea is to present the new ministers to parliament for approval after the local (municipal) elections on 21 May and 4 June, Plenković told reporters while on a visit to Vienna.

Parliament breaks up on Friday (12 May) for campaigning for the two rounds of municipal elections. A HDZ parliamentary official said parliament could reconvene on 7 June or shortly before.

Deputies representing national minorities together with several independent deputies could prove pivotal for the formation of a new majority.

The government is now without ministers in charge of internal affairs, the judiciary, the public administration and energy and the environment.

EURACTIV.com with Reuters

Photo: Croatian Prime Minister Andrej Plenković gestures during a press conference after Finance

Minister Zdravko Marić survived a no-confidence vote, in Zagreb, 4 May 2017. [Antonio Bat/ EPA]

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