European Elections monitor

Andrej Kiska is the new president of the Republic of Slovakia

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Results

Andrej Kiska, who was running as an independent was elected on 29th March as President of the Republic of Slovakia in the second round of voting. With 59.3% of the vote he easily drew ahead of outgoing Prime Minister Robert Fico (Direction-Social Democracy, SMER-SD) who won 40.61% of the vote. In the first round the latter won 28.01% of the vote and Andrej Kiska 24.01%. Andrej Kiska won 7 of the 8 Slovakian regions; only Trencin voted mainly in support of Robert Fico. He also achieved higher results in the country's larger towns, notably Bratislava (74.16% of the vote). Turnout lay at 50.48%, which was higher than the rate registered in the 1st round (+ 7.08 points).

Results of the Presidential election on 15th and 29th March 2014 in Slovakia

Turnout: 43.40% (1st round) and 50.48% (2nd round)

Politicial Parties	No of votes won (1st round)	% of votes won (1st round)	No of votes won (2nd round)	% of votes won (2nd round)
Andrej Kiska (independent)	455 996	24.01	1 307 065	59.38
Robert Fico (Direction-Social Democracy, SMER-SD)	531 919	28.01	893 841	40.61
Radoslav Prochazka	403 548	21.25		
Milan Knazko	244 401	12.87		
Gyula Bardos	97 035	5.11		
Pavol Hrusovsky (Christian Democratic Movement, KDH, Democratic and Christian Union-Democratic Union SDKU-DS, and Most-Hid)	63 298	3.33		
Helena Mezenska (Party of Ordinary People and Independents, OL'aNO)	45 180	2.38		
Jan Jurista (Communist Party, KSS)	12 209	0.64		
Jan Carnogursky (independent)	12 207	0.64		
Viliam Fischer	9 514	0.50		
Jozef Behyl	9 126	0.48		
Milan Melnik	7 678	0.40		
Jozef Simko (Modern Slovakian Party, SMS)	4 674	0.25	w	
Stanislav Martincko (Coalition of Slovakian Citizens)	2 547	0		

Source: Agence France Presse

"*I want to thank the voters who gave me a strong mandate. I shall fulfil all of the promises I made. I promise to be the president of all citizens; I shall work to unite and motivate people so that we can be proud of our country, so that people feel good here,*" declared Andrej Kiska when the results were announced. "*Andrej Kiska may attract supporters of the candidates who failed in the first round and can be sure of any protest vote whilst Robert Fico is especially counting on the turnout of his party,*» maintained Grigorij Meseznikov, Director of the Public Affairs Institute (IVO) as he spoke during the two rounds. Indeed the independent candidate clearly benefited from a wave of anti-Robert feeling sentiment and the mistrust of the population regarding the political classes. "*Andrej Kiska's victory shows that the Slovaks want a president who can represent them all (…) Robert Fico failed to motivate his supporters. Many voters are disappointed with his government,*" indicated Grigorij Meseznikov.

The independent candidate's campaign, which focused on the fight to counter corruption and the concentration of power, was a success amongst Slovakians who are concerned about a possible presidentialisation of the country's political system and especially about seeing one party holding all of the power. "*It was not a vote for Kiska but one against Robert Fico and the threat he represented in terms of his party's control over all positions of power,*" indicated political scientist Samuel Abraham. In this regard the vote on 29th March recalls two unsuccessful bids by former Prime Minister (1993-1994 and 1994-1998) Vladimir Meciar (Movement for a Democratic Slovakia, HZDS) to be elected as head of State (1999 and 2004).

"*Andrej Kiska is a man without political opinion and with no leadership skills but he is the ideal joker for all of those who hate traditional politics and therefore the policy undertaken by Robert Fico. For the first time ever the Prime Minister failed to estimate a new trend and a change in public opinion which is no longer directed against either left or right but against politics as such,*" writes Dag Danis, a political editorialist for the daily *Dnes*.

In spite of his popularity (linked to his anti-austerity policy and his defence of the poorest and the middle classes) and the support provided to him by the outgoing President of the Republic Ivan Gasparovic, Prime Minister Robert Fico who was quick to qualify the presidential elections as a "referendum on his party – Direction-Social Democracy," therefore lost his wager over becoming head of State. During the campaign for the 2nd round the head of government criticised his rival's past whom he qualified as a "usurer" (Andrej Kiska has managed consumer credit companies) and accused him of being close to the Church of Scientology. Religion is important in Slovakia where 60% of the population declare they are Catholic. Robert Fico has also highlighted his Catholic upbringing on several occasions.

"*Even if he loses Robert Fico will continue to be Prime Minister, and the government and parliament will continue their work,*" indicated Pavol Paska (SMER-SD) the leader of the Council of the Republic, the only chamber in Parlament (*Narodna rada Slovenskej republiky*) between rounds. "*Robert Fico will not resign from his post and will try to remain as Prime Minister until the end of his mandate in 2016 in spite of his shaken authority,*" declared Grigorij Meseznikov.

51 year-old, Andrej Kiska was born in Poprad, a town in the centre of Slovakia. He is a graduate form the electrical engineering faculty of the Technological University of Bratislava. He started his professional career as a designer before founding TatraCredit, Triangle and Quatro in 1996, three consumer credit companies which he sold in 2005 to the Slovakian bank VUB. A multi-millionaire, he created the Good Angel (*Dobry Anjel*), charity in the same year with Igor Brosmann, an association which provides financial support to poor Slovakian and Czech families whose children are seriously ill, to which he donated 2.5 million €. Andrej Kiska resigned from the board on 1st June 2013 to devote himself to the presidential election.

Andrej Kiska, who was the first to say he would be running for president in this election in the autumn of 2012, is also the first head of the Slovakian State not to have a communist past since the country's independence in 1993.

It remains to be seen what the new head of State – a novice in politics, who is positioned above the parties but whose idea of politics is unclear - will do with his term in office. He has said that he wants to provide a counterbalance to the government led

by Robert Fico. "*The new head of State is certainly less experienced than Robert Fico but he supports democracy, the market economy and a pro-Western direction in terms of foreign policy,*" indicated Dag Danis. "The only danger is that Prime Minister Fico, once vanquished, will now pick a fight with the new President of the Republic," maintains Grigorij Meseznikov.

Andrej Kiska will be sworn in on 15th June the day Ivan Gasparovic's second mandate comes to an end. He said that his first foreign visit will "naturally" take him to the Czech Republic.

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