European Elections monitor

Andrej Babis's party ANO wins the Czech elections

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Results

ANO, whose acronym means both "yes" and "Action of Dissatisfied Citizens", a populist party, member of the outgoing government party led by billionaire Andrej Babis easily won the general election that took place in the Czech Republic on 20th and 21st October with 29.64% of the vote and 78 seats (+ 31 in comparison with the previous general election on 25th and 26th October 2013).

The Democratic Civic Party (ODS), a eurosceptic right-wing party led by Petr Fiala came second with 11.32% of the vote and 25 seats (+ 9). It is followed by the Pirate Party (P), which won 10.79% of the vote and 22 seats (+ 22). The Pirates are making their entry into parliament for the first time in their history. "*I believe that we succeeded in mobilising all of those who are voting for the first time as well as those who have not voted over the last 10 to 15 years*" stressed their leader Ivan Bartos.

The nationalist party, Freedom and Direct Democracy (SPD) a populist right-wing movement led by Tomio Okamura, took fourth place with 10.64% of the vote and 22 seats (+ 22). "*I am happy that our ideas and our programme which aim to introduce direct democracy, to give power to the citizens, to end the Islamisation of the Czech Republic and to stop the reception of migrants enjoyed such wide support*" declared the leader of the party on the announcement of the results.

The Communist Party of Bohemia and Moravia (KSCM), the last unreformed communist party in Central Europe, led by Vojtech Fillip, won 7.76% of the vote and 15 seats (- 18). It took the lead over the Social Democratic Party (CSSD) of outgoing Prime Minister Bohuslav Sobotka, who suffered a major defeat and won only 7.27% of the vote and 15 seats (- 35), its weakest result ever.

Three other parties will be represented in the House of Deputies, the lower house of parliament. These will be the Christian Democratic Union-People's Party (KDU-CSL) a centrist party led by Pavel Belobradek, which won 5.80% of the vote and 11 seats (- 3); Tradition, Responsibility, Prosperity, a centre right party led by Miroslav Kalousek, which won 5.31% of the vote and 6 seats (- 20) and finally the Mayors and Independents (STAN), a party led by Petr Gazdik, which won 5.18% of the vote and 6 seats (+ 6).

Turnout was almost the same as that recorded in the previous general elections on 25th and 26th October 2013, totalling 60.84%, +1.36 points more.

In all 9 parties will be represented in the House of Deputies that will be extremely fragmented. After the election the Czech political landscape is in total disruption. "*We face an earthquake, a total revolt against the traditional parties and orthodoxy. Since 1990 I have no memory of elections that upset the Czech political landscape so much,*" stressed Milan Nic, an analyst for the German Council for External Relations (DGAP).

General elections results on 20th and 21st October 2017 in the Czech Republic

Turnout: 60.84%

Political parties	No. of votes won	% of votes won	No. of seats
ANO	1 500 113	29.64	78
Civic Democratic Party (ODS)	572 962	11.32	25
Pirate Party (P)	546 393	10.79	22
Freedom and Direct Democracy (SPD)	538 547	10.64	22
Communist Party of Bohemia and Moravia (KSCM)	393 100	7.76	15
Social Democratic Party (CSSD)	368 347	7.27	15
People's Christian Democratic Union (KDU-CSL)	293 643	5.80	11
Tradition, responsibility, prosperity 09 (TOP 09)	268 811	5.31	6
Mayors and independents (STAN)	262 157	5.18	6
Others	346 992	6.29	0

Source: https://www.volby.cz/pls/ps2013/ps2?xjazyk=CZ

Andrej Babis is therefore about to become the next head of the Czech government. The president of the Republic Milos Zeman said during the electoral campaign that he would appoint the leader of the party which came out ahead in the general election as Prime Minister. Each of the political parties announced that it would not govern with Andrej Babis. However, as Michal Klima of the University of Prague says, "*If ANO wins the general elections with a real lead it will become an extremely wealthy partner, which will be able to choose between four or five other parties and will even be able to form a coalition with just one partner.*"

Lukas Macek, Director of Sciences Po Dijon said, "*In the negotiations it will be impossible to avoid ANO. Although some think that there might be an anti-Babis coalition formed with all of the small parties allied against ANO, this scenario is almost impossible. ANO's lead is so overwhelming and the diversity so great between the parties entering parliament for this to be a possibility. ANO will be in the government and will lead the dance,*" he indicated. Andrej Babis did however say that he ruled out working with any of the extremes, both with the Communist Party of Bohemia and Moravia and with Freedom and Direct Democracy.

"*Andrej Babis is a populist par excellence, an unpredictable oligarch who wants to govern the country as he would a family business – he is an autocrat who is not too fond of democracy and who ultimately resembles Donald Trump a great deal,*" maintains Jiri Pehe, Director of the New York University of Prague. Jacques Rupnik, a researcher at Sciences Po, qualifies the victor in the general election as "*an entrepreneurial populist*", "*an entrepreneur who has succeeded in business and who, in a way, wants to extend his success or transform the try by entering the political arena and he is doing it by breaking up the existing partisan structure. Generally, he concentrates on one theme: the fight to counter corruption and efficacy*" he notes.

"*Andrej Babis stands as the only person who can maintain order in the country. Many voters are convinced that he will be a good manager, notably because he is a millionaire and therefore he will not need to steal from the State,*" analyses Josef Mlejnek, a political expert of the Charles of Prague University.

Aged 63, Andrej Babis was born in Bratislava. The son of a diplomat, he has lived in France and Switzerland and is a graduate in economy from the University of

Bratislava. He started his career in international trade, and was leader of the Czechoslovakian trade delegation in Morocco for six years. In 1993, he founded Agrofert, which is a group of businesses in the agro-food, chemical and lumber industries. More than 50, 000 people work for this holding which is the leading employer in the Czech Republic. Andrej Babis's fortune is estimated at 3 billion €. He also owns the media group Mafra, which notably publishes Mlada fronta Dnes and Lidove noviny, two of the country's most read daily papers.

On 11th May 2011 Andrej Babis founded ANO, a party of which he is still the chairman. He won 18.66% of the vote in the general elections on 25th and 26th October 2013 and entered the government led by the Social Democrat Bohuslav Sobotka. Babis then was appointed Finance Minister in 2014, a post he occupied until he was ousted on 24th May last.

On 6th September the House of Deputies approved, 123 votes in support, (4 against and 7 abstentions) the lifting of his parliamentary immunity and that of Jaroslav Faltynek, ANO's Deputy Chairman and former member of Agrofert's management. In 2009 the two men are suspected of having illegally helped Capi hnizdo (Stork's Nest), a conference centre that lies to the south east of Prague, with 50 million crowns (1.85 million €) in European subsidies given in to SMEs and tourism. On 9th October, Andrej Babis was indicted, a decision against which he immediately appealed.

On 21st October Andrej Babis therefore won his wager by making his party the leading political force in the Czech Republic, which should enable him to reach his goal and govern the country for the next four years. "*I succeeded what I wanted to do in my life. This is why today I have the impression that I have put my strength and experience to the service of the citizens of our country,*" declared the ANO leader, whose ideology is as vague as his programme fluctuates. It is difficult to predict exactly what the next Czech legislature will be like.

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