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RESULTS

Robert Fico's Party, Direction-Social Democracy, (left) wins the absolute majority in the Slovakian elections, an all time first in the country.

Direction-Social Democracy (SMER-SD), a party led by former Prime Minister (2006-2010) Robert Fico easily won the early general elections that took place in Slovakia on 10th March. He won 44.41% of the vote and 83 of the 150 seats in the National Council of the Republic (Narodna rada Slovenskej republiky), the only chamber in Parliament, i.e. +15 in comparison with the general election on 12th June 2010. For the first time since the country's independence in 1993 a party has succeeded in won the absolute majority in the general elections.

SMER-SD came out ahead of the Christian-Democratic Movement (KDH) led by Jan Figel and the Ordinary People and Independents' Party (OL'aNO) created on 28th October last and led by Igor Matovica which won 8.82% and 8.55% of the vote respectively and 16 seats each (+1 for the KDH). Most-Hid won 6.89% of the vote (13 seats, - 1). The Democratic and Christian Union-Democratic Party (SDKU-DS), the party led by outgoing Prime Minister Iveta Radicova won 6.09% and 11 seats (-17) and Freedom and Solidarity (Sloboda a Solidarita, SaS), 5.88% and 11 seats (- 11).

Turnout was higher than forecast in the polls. It totalled 59.11% ie very slightly more than the figure recorded in June 2010 (+ 0.28 points).

"The results surprised me," declared Robert Fico after the election. "The main thing is that we have succeeded with the programme we offered the Slovaks as an alternative to the right," he added. "We are against privatisations, support better legal protection for workers, we recommend major public investments. This is the programme we shall try to implement," he stressed. In spite of his wide majority the SMER-SD leader

says he is ready to join forces with other parties that support his programme.

"More than the triumph of the left we are witnessing the collapse of the right, it has been devastated," indicates Etienne Boisserie, a historian specialised in Slovakia at the National Institute of Eastern Languages and Civilisation (INALCO). The liberal parties suffered because of the Gorilla scandal, the name given to the politico-financial affair that blew up after the online publication of recorded conversations in December, which reveal that there had been bribes and money laundering when businesses were privatised in 2006-2006, when the rightwing was in power. "Around half of those who usually vote for the right believe that none of them deserve their confidence. The Gorilla affair has helped the protest parties by calling for the departure of the corrupt politicians," indicated Marian Lesko, a journalist for the economic magazine Trend, on the eve of the election. "It is clear that we should blame Gorilla," declared Mikulas Dzurinda, leader of the SDKU-DS, outgoing Foreign Minister and former Prime Minister (1998-2006), when the results were announced. The scandal notably benefited the leftwing op-

position and the new Ordinary People and Independents' Party which will be making its debut in Parliament. Igor Matovica, who quit Freedom and Solidarity (SaS) one year ago, says that he (successfully) passed a lie detector test to prove that he was clear of all corruption.

Over the last two years Robert Fico has criticised the cuts in State spending undertaken by outgoing Prime Minister Iveta Radicova, who made the country's return to budgetary balance the priority of her government. In 2011 it lay at 4.6% (8.1% a year prior to this). *"We are against privatisations, we support a better protection of workers and greater state investments,"* he said. Mr Fico wants to do away with the flat tax set at 19% (for VAT, income tax and business tax) and to raise the latter two tax rates to 25% for the wealthiest Slovaks (people earning more than 33,000€) and to 22% for businesses whose profits rise over 30 million € annually. Robert Fico hopes to introduce a special tax of 0.7% on bank deposits. *"If you have record profits then you will have to pay record taxes,"* he declared during the campaign.

In spite of these declarations the results of Robert Fico's government (2006-2010) pleads in favour of the continuation of the present policy. When he was head of State the SMER-SD leader indeed succeeded in maintaining the liberal right's legacy whilst increasing the State's social spending, notably to reduce the effects of the international economic crisis. *"Whatever the government in charge of the country it will have around six weeks to show that it can consolidate the budget,"* declared Peter Kazimir (SMER-DS), possibly the future Finance Minister. *"We support public finance consolidation but not the detriment of the people with the lowest incomes. Our programme is pro-European. We support the protection of the euro zone and the euro as a strong European currency,"* indicated Robert Fico.

Slovakias' socio-economic situation is fragile even though the country recovered growth in 2011 (3.3%). Unemployment lies at 13.3% of the

working population. *"Whoever wins these elections the government cannot afford to be lax with public finances,"* said Lubomir Korsnak, a financial analyst with UniCredit SpA.

Born 47 years ago (in the west of the country) in Topolcany, Robert Fico is a graduate of law from the University of Comenius and the State Institute and a graduate of law from the Slovakian Academy of Science in Bratislava. A member of the communist party in 1987, then of the Democratic Left Party (SDL), he entered Parliament for the first time in 1992. He quit the SDL after the general elections on 25th and 26th September 1998 when his party entered government without himself achieving a ministerial post. One year later in December 1999 he founded his own party Direction (SMER).

Robert Fico started his professional career at the Institute of Law at the Justice Ministry before being appointed in 1994 as Slovakia's representative at the European Court of Human Rights in Strasbourg, a post he occupied for six years. In 2004 Direction absorbed the Democratic Left Party, the Social Democratic Party (SDSS) and Social Democratic Alternative (SDS). Two years later Robert Fico became Prime Minister after his party won the general elections on 17th June 2006. His party again won the elections on 12th June 2010 but he could not form a government because he could not offer a coherent line of action and was unable to rally people to his name. In October last he managed to clinch the organisation of an election from Iveta Radicova's government in exchange for the SMER-SD vote in support of the adoption of the European Stability and Financial Facility (EFSF).

After this victory Robert Fico, who, during his first mandate as head of the country joined forces with the far right National Party (SNS) and who does not hesitate to attack the Hungarian minority (around 10% of the population) may create a certain amount of tension between Bratislava and Budapest where nationalist Viktor Orban (FIDESZ) holds office.

Results of the General Elections on 10th March 2012 in Slovakia

Turnout: 59.11%

Political Parties	No. of votes won	% of votes cast	No of seats won
Direction- Social Democracy (SMER-SD)	1 134 280	44.41	83
Christian Democratic Movement (KDH)	225 361	8.82	16
Ordinary People's and Independents' Party (OL'aNO)	218 537	8.55	16
Most-Hid	176 088	6,89	13
Democratic and Christian Union –Democratic Party (SDKU-DS)	155 744	6.09	11
Freedom and Solidarity (Sloboda a Solidarita, SaS)	150 266	5.88	11
National Party (SNS)	116 420	4.55	0
Hungarian Coalition Party (SMK)	109 483	4.28	0
Others	232 425	10.53	0

Source : Slovakian Statistics Bureau: http://nrsr2012.statistics.sk/priebezne/tab_Pv_sk.html

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