

Borut Pahor is elected President of the Republic of Slovenia

Corinne Deloy

Translated by helen Levy

Results
2nd round

Borut Pahor (Social Democratic Party, SD) won the 2nd round of the presidential election on 2nd December in Slovenia. Former Prime Minister (2008-2011) won 67.44% of the vote and easily pulled ahead of the outgoing Head of State, Danilo Türk, who won 32.56%. Turnout was the lowest ever since the country's independence in 1991: it totalled 41.95%, i.e. 16.51 points less in comparison with the second round of the presidential election on 11th November 2007. It totalled 48.24% in the first round on 11th November last.

Results of the Presidential Election on 11th November and 2nd December in Slovenia

Turnout: 48.24% (1st round) and 41.95% (2nd round)

Candidates	Number of votes won (1st round)	(%) of votes won (1st round)	Number of votes won (2nd round)	(%) of votes won (2nd round)
Borut Pahor (Social Democratic Party, SD)	325 406	39.93	474 309	67.44
Danilo Türk	292 547	36.90	228 980	32.56
Milan Zver (Democratic Party, SDS)	197 042	24.18		

Source : Internet site of the elections in Slovenia (<http://volitve.gov.si/vp2012/>)

"This victory is the start of new hope, of a new era," declared Borut Pahor. He called for "mutual confidence, respect and tolerance," adding "although our differences are great what brings us together is stronger." He set the goal of "rallying the right wing majority and the left opposition in a country that is suffering a social and economic crisis in order to put Slovenia back on the path of growth."

The former Prime Minister supported the austerity reforms of Janez Jansa's government (Democratic Party SDS): "We can no longer waste time speculating about alternative solutions. We must work now with the government on the decisions that have to be taken. I am not the government's lawyer but as the future president of the republic I think it is my duty not to criticise it," stressed Borut Pahor, who warned against the fact that "the collapse of the government would lead to chaos."

Although in Slovenia the President of the Republic has but honorary power, the country which is expe-

riencing a serious crisis, should however benefit from the work undertaken by the head of State and the Prime Minister together. "Borut Pahor's victory is a good sign for the international financial markets because he implemented several reforms when he was Prime Minister and he supports the government's austerity policy led by Janez Jansa," stressed Matevz Tomsic, of the Social Studies Department of Nova Gorica.

Between the two rounds of the presidential election the atmosphere was marked by the anger of a part of the population. Indeed Slovenia, after having been one of the best of the 12 new member states which entered the EU in the 21st century, is now extremely affected by the economic crisis. The country was downgraded by the ratings agencies last summer, notably because of the fragility of its banking system (the government is planning now to sell some of the shares that the State owns (25%) in the country's biggest bank, Nova Ljubljanska Banka). Unemployment totals 11.6% of

the working population and many analysts believe that Ljubljana might be the 6th European capital to have to turn to international aid. Prime Minister Janez Jansa, whose government has taken a number of austerity measures (reduction in civil servants' salaries, retirement pensions and certain social benefits) in view of reviving the economy so as to reduce the budgetary deficit which rose to 6.4% in 2011 – down to 4.2% of the GDP in 2012 and to 3% the following year, mentioned the possibility of a "Greek scenario" just a few weeks ago. Slovenia entered into recession on 30th November recording a second consecutive contraction in its GDP (-0.6% in the 3rd quarter). The EU is anticipating a recession of 2.3% in 2012 and 1.6% in 2013. Slovenia has also been rocked by several corruption scandals (conviction of Pavel Rupa, CEO of one of the country's biggest companies to one year in prison and a 40,000€ fine for abuse of power; the challenge made to the Mayor of Ljubljana and leader of the main opposition party, Slovenia Positive (PS), Zoran Jankovic, and his two sons, in a financial affair (to a total of 10 million €) involving the construction of the sporting complex of Stozice inaugurated in August 2010 in the capital).

30,000 people demonstrated against economic austerity on 17th November answering the call of the unions brandishing the slogan "*We want to live not survive*". More than 50,000 were in the streets of Ljubljana on 30th November to show their discontent about the political elites to cries of "*Gotov je*" (that's enough) or "*Gotovi so!*" (they're finished). In Maribor on 26th November 6,000 demonstrators asked for the resignation of the Mayor Franc Kangler (People's Party SLS) who is suspected of corruption. Other rallies took place in Koper, Nova Gorica and Novo Mesto.

The Return of Borut Pahor

Aged 49, Borut Pahor comes from Postojna. A graduate in sociology, political science and journalism from the University of Ljubljana he joined the United List of Social Democrats (ZLSD) in 1993 after having been a member of the Communist League of Slovenia. He then became chair of the party in 1997, re-elected in 2001 and 2005, the year in which he changed the party's name to the Social Democratic Party (SD). He was replaced as head of the party in June last by Igor Luksic, who only won by 10 votes. Elected MP for the first time in 1990 Borut Pahor was re-elected two years later then again in 1996 and 2000. In 2004 he was elected to the European Parliament.

After the SD's victory in the general elections on 21st September 2008, Borut Pahor became Prime Minister. His government coalition formed with Zares (Z), the Democratic Liberal Party (LDS) and the Democratic Party of Pensioners (DeSUS), crumbled as the reforms were undertaken and the failure to win four referenda organised in 2011 (on the introduction of a new labour contract for the unemployed, students and the retired; on the extension of working hours; the change in the financing of pensions, enhancement of measures against illegal work and the change in the law on the opening of the secret service's archives). On 21st September 2011 the Slovenian parliament rejected the motion of confidence put forward by Borut Pahor's minority government which led to early general elections in which the Social Democrats suffered a severe defeat (10% of the vote).

With the presidential election on 11th November and 2nd December Borut Pahor has made a comeback, which is as unexpected as it is triumphant.

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