

European
Elections monitorUnsurprisingly outgoing Prime
Minister Viktor Orban wins the
general election in Hungary

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Results

As expected the Alliance of Young Democrats-Civic Union (FIDESZ-MPP) won the general elections on 6th April 2014 in Hungary. It won 44.54% of the vote (result of the proportional vote alone), ahead of the Alliance for a Change in Government, formed by four left wing parties which took 25.99% of the vote. The Movement for a Better Hungary (Jobbik Magyarorszagert Mozgalom), a far right party led by Gabor Vona won 20.54% of the vote. Finally Politics can be Different (LMP), an ecologist liberal party led by Andras Schiffer and Bernadett Szel will be represented in the *Országgyűlés*, the only chamber in parliament, since it won 5.26% of the vote.

The general election on 6th April was the first to take place under the new electoral law approved on 26th November 2012 by Viktor Orban's government. The system of transferring votes in the new voting method favours the party that won. "With this new electoral system FIDESZ can now win the 2/3 majority of MPs in parliament simply with half of the votes cast in the proportional system," stressed Robert Laszlo of the *think tank* Political Capital.

Similarly, for the first time ever, around 250,000 people of Hungarian descent, who most often live in Hungary's neighbouring countries and who acquired nationality during the last legislature, thanks to a bill approved in 2011, (in all 550,000 people have become Hungarian over the last

nine years), were allowed vote (in the proportional vote). The authorities in office also encouraged "small" parties to take part in the election: hence 18 parties were running in comparison with only 6 in 2010.

Turnout was slightly below that recorded in the previous election on 11th April 2010: it totalled 60.2% ie -4.17 points less.

The only issue at stake in this election was not knowing who would win, but the extent of his victory. Would FIDESZ retain its 2/3 majority in Parliament? That was the question. Viktor Orban seems to have won his wager since he won 133 seats according to the most recent results.

Results of the general elections on 6th April 2014 in Hungary (proportional election)

Turnout: 60.2%

Political Parties	No of votes won	% of votes won	No. of seats won
Alliance of Young Democrats-Civic Union (FIDESZ-MPP)	2 135 961	44.54	133
Alliance for a Change of Government (Socialist Party (MSZP), Együtt (Together)-Dialogue for Hungary 2014 (E-PM 2014), Democratic Coalition (DK))	1 246 465	25.99	38
Movement for a Better Hungary (Jobbik Magyarorszagert Mozgalom, Jobbik)	985 029	20.54	23
Politics Can be Different (LMP)	252 373	5.26	5
Others	195 131	3.67	0

Source : http://www.valasztas.hu/en/ogyv2014/416/416_0_index.html

"We can quite safely say we have won," declared the outgoing Prime Minister who rejoiced saying that Hungary

was the "most united country in the world". "Let us show them that we are strong and united. Let us show them that

we are not trying to please anyone but that we are masters of our future,” stressed Viktor Orban during the electoral campaign. “We have transformed and renovated Hungary, we have turned an old clapped out banger into a racing car,” he said. His motto was “Hungary is doing better.”

The outgoing Prime Minister campaigned with the support of his economic results. In 2009 Hungary was about to default and the government had to call on the IMF and the EU which advocated radical measures: structural reform, privatisation, spending cuts. The rise to power of FIDESZ led to a radical change. Viktor Orban’s economic policy mixes liberal measures (rise of VAT from 24% to 27%) – the highest in the EU – reductions in social aid and unemployment benefits and a state led policy (taxing of banks and multinationals, the nationalisation of pension funds, revival of domestic demand, reduction of energy tariffs – which represent 30% of Hungarian household spending) and also a great deal of political clientelism.

Four years on unemployment lies at 8.6% ie the lowest rate in five years; public deficit is below 3% as demanded by the EU’s Stability and Growth Pact and debt is declining (it dropped from 82% to 80% of the GDP but is still the highest in Central Europe). The ratings agency Standard & Poors revised the sovereign debt prospects upwards because of “more balanced risks”. Investments are still low (16% of the GDP) and the average available income per capita is still amongst the lowest in the OECD countries.

50 year-old Orban, who comes from Szekesfehervar, a town on the north-eastern shores of Lake Balaton, is a graduate in law. On 30th March 1988 he was one of the founder members of the Alliance of Young Democrats. In 1990 he was elected MP; in 1993 he took over the party’s chair. In 1998 aged 35, he became the young Prime Minister in Europe before losing to the left opposition in the general elections four years later on 7th and 20th April 2002. This was a defeat that Viktor Orban never really accepted. He took his revenge in 2010 when he became head of government once more – a post he would retain for the next four years.

“Viktor Orban is a leader who has managed to inspire personal attachment. For the core of his electorate he is not just a political, but also a spiritual, charismatic and ideological leader. Alongside this the adoption of a text planning for a 6.5% reduction in gas bills, 5.7% less on electricity bills and 3.3% less on heating bills found wide echo amongst

the voters,” indicated Peter Kreko, Director of the think tank Political Capital. “Criticism of him has strengthened the image amongst his supporters of a leader who is at the service of freedom, who is prepared to fight unrelentingly for national sovereignty in the face of Western, multinational and banking interference. With each external attack he has been able to develop his discourse to the full regarding the need to fight to protect independence against foreign interference,” he added.

Hungarians have given their Prime Minister ‘four more years’ as he had requested, so that he can “forge Hungary’s future” *“He is a politician with a certain charisma who knows how to talk to the crowds, attract people and he has the gift of fascinating others. He is appreciated in a country that misses its former influence, its pre-First World War influence – which was dominated by major powers on several occasions – hence its stance as a victim – its rebellious attitude, notably vis-à-vis the European Union,”* declared Antonela Capelle-Pogacean, researcher at CERI Sciences Po.

Although FIDESZ does not satisfy all of the Hungarians the opposition is now almost non-existent. Whilst the change to the electoral law has strengthened the majority aspect of the vote to the detriment of proportional representation, the left wing is extremely divided. The Alliance for a Change in Government, which wanted the election to be a referendum on the Prime Minister and whose programme mainly comprised getting rid of Viktor Orban, came together rather late in the day and with great difficulty because of the divergence between its various members. The socialist leader and left wing candidate for Prime Minister Attila Mesterhazy, promised during the electoral campaign to increase the minimum salary and reduce prices of essential commodities if he won the election. This did not convince his fellow countrymen and was not enough to attract the abstentionists and those who did not know who to vote for. Nor did it convince those who have been disappointed by FIDESZ. *“We are not denying it – defeat was terrible and it is a great disappointment for those who wanted to change government,”* declared the former Prime Minister (2009-2010) Gordon Bajnai.

Many of those unhappy with the Orban system and notably the youngest turned to the Movement for a Better Hungary. The far right movement deemed to be fascist, openly anti-Semitic and anti-Roma (Hungary has a population of 600,000 Roma,

ie 7% of the population) decided to reposition over the last few months and become more respectable. *"They decided about a year ago to reshape their image far from extremism so that they could survive and progress,"* indicated Kristof Domina, Chairman of the Institute Athena, an observatory of extremist movements in Europe. The work seems to have paid off for the Movement for a Better Hungary which rose beyond the 20% mark in votes on 6th April.

During the previous term in office Viktor Orban placed those loyal to him at the head of the public institutions that could potentially counter his authority (Constitutional Court, Auditors Court, General Prosecutor, Media Authority, Central

Bank, Competition Office etc ...). *"During the term in office we saw a legislative frenzy with the approval of 859 bills – which enabled Viktor Orban to centralise all of the State structures, strengthen government's roles and to redefine the balance of power,"* indicated Antonela Capelle-Pogacean. With this electoral victory on 6th April the outgoing Prime Minister now holds all the levers of power. *"Viktor Orban holds the greatest number of powers since the communist period,"* stressed Gabor Filippov, a political analyst for the Magyar Progressziv Intezet Institute.

For the first time since the collapse of communism in 1989 a right wing party is in a position and will hold power for a second consecutive mandate.

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