

## Ahead after the first round of the Czech Presidential election, outgoing President Milos Zeman will however find it difficult to take the second round

As forecast by all the polls, the outgoing President of the Czech Republic, Milos Zeman (Citizens' Rights Party, SPOZ) came out ahead in the first round of the presidential election on 12th and 13th January. He won 38.65% of the vote and pulled ahead of Jiri Drahos (independent), former chair of the Academy of Science, who has been supported by the centrist People's Christian Democratic Party (KDU-CSL), led by Pavel Belobradek and also Mayors and Independents (STAN), a party led by Petr Gazdik, which won 26.60% of the vote. The two men will face each other in a second round on 26th and 27th January next.

Pavel Fischer (independent), director of pollster STEM and former Ambassador for the Czech Republic in France (2003-2010), came third with 10.23% of the vote; Michal Horacek (independent), entrepreneur, author/composer, journalist and music producer, won 9.18% and Marek Hilser (independent), doctor and civic rights activist won 8.83% of the vote. The four other candidates including the former Prime Minister (2006-2009) and businessman Mirek Topolaneck (independent), supported by the Civic Democratic Party (ODS) won under 5%.

The 12,000 voters living abroad placed Jiri Drahos ahead with 45.20%, ahead of Pavel Fischer (20.51%) and Marek Hilser (11.50%), Milos Zeman came 5th with 7.47% of the vote.

Turnout was almost the same as registered in the first round of the previous presidential election on 11th and 12th January 2013 (+ 0.61 point) lying at 61.92%.

### Results of the 1st round of the Presidential election on 12th and 13th January 2018 in the Czech Republic

Turnout: 61.92%

Candidates	No. of votes won (1st round)	% of votes won (1st round)
<b>Milos Zeman (Citizens' Rights Party, SPOZ)</b>	1 985 547	38.56
<b>Jiri Drahos (independent)</b>	1 369 601	26.60
<b>Pavel Fischer (independent)</b>	526 694	10.23
<b>Michal Horacek (independent)</b>	472 643	9.18
<b>Marek Hilser (independent)</b>	454 949	8.83
<b>Mirek Topolaneck (independent)</b>	221 689	4.30
<b>Jiri Hynek (independent)</b>	63 348	1.23
<b>Petr Hannig (Common Sense Party)</b>	29 228	0.56
<b>Vratislav Kukhanec (independent)</b>	24 442	0.47

Source : <https://www.volby.cz/pls/prez2018/pe2?xjazyk=CZ>

## Presidential election in Czech Republic 12<sup>th</sup>-13<sup>th</sup> and 26<sup>th</sup>-27<sup>th</sup> January 2018

*"There has hardly been an electoral campaign. Jiri Drahos will have to do more than offer an anti-Zeman discourse. He will have to distinguish himself and take position on the main issues that interest the Czechs,"* declared Balik, a teacher of political science at the University of Masaryk of Brno. *"The results of the first round are a severe setback for Milos Zeman, even though formally he won. Indeed, the outgoing President has a weak reserve of votes in view of the second round on 26th and 27th January,"* stressed Josef Mlejnek, a political expert who added, *"partisans are now going to try to depict Jiri Drahos as friend of migrants, an agent of the European Union."*

*"The second round will be a tight duel. Milos Zeman has an enormous problem because it is clear that the candidates that came behind the leading duo; ie Pavel Fischer, Marek Hilser and Michal Horacek, will asked their electorates to vote for Jiri Drahos,"* indicated Jiri Pehe, political analyst. *"The candidate facing Milos Zeman, in the second round will have to rally all of those who want the supreme office to follow the prestigious heritage of Vaclav Havel,"* says Jacques Rupnik, a political expert at the Centre for International Research (CERI) at Sciences Po, Paris.

A novice in politics, Jiri Drahos defends the establishment of a modern, pro-Western State and the Czech Republic's membership of the European Union, as well as Prague's adoption of the euro. He is however, against the quota mechanism introduced by Brussels for a better distribution of refugees from the Middle East and Africa between the Member States and hopes for greater control on the EU's borders. *"The Euro-Atlantic establishment of the Czech Republic will one of the main themes in my electoral campaign in the upcoming second round,"* he declared when the results were announced. Jiri Drahos, who won the support of the Civic Democratic Party (ODS) led by Petr Fiala in the second round the day after the release of the results of the first round, accuses his rival, Milos Zeman, of dividing society.

The outgoing President of the Republic is against the sanctions introduced by Brussels against Moscow and deems that the annexation of Crimea by Russia to be *"an established fact"*. He also supports American President Donald Trump (Republican) and wants Prague to acknowledge Jerusalem as the capital of Israel in the wake of Washington. Milos Zeman, who has said he is a fan of Norbert Hofer (Freedom Party, FPÖ), a populist candidate in the Austrian Presidential election in 2016, qualified the arrival of refugees in Europe as *"an organised invasion"* and that it will provide a *"breeding ground for terrorist attacks"*. Criticised by intellectuals and the more urban Czech, the outgoing Head of State, who did not undertake an electoral campaign for the first round, would like to be seen as the representative of those forgotten by the economic transition. *"I have to be prepared for a difficult position in the second round,"* he declared, complaining about the *"national Czech character"* meaning that *"those who are losing join forces to bring down those who are beating them."*

Jiri Drahos has said that he would like to face *"Milos Zeman in a one-to-one debate"* between rounds. The latter who has refused to take part in the debates organised prior to 12th and 13th January answered: *"I have never been afraid of taking part in a debate, I am still young and full of energy and any kind of debate would be a pleasure. I have just listened to Jiri Drahos on the television and I am happy to satisfy his request."*

All of the polls undertaken prior to the first round of voting predicted Jiri Drahos's victory on 27th January next with approximately a five-point lead. Although the Czech president does not enjoy any great power, the duel on 26th and 27th January is of the greatest importance for the Czechs and also for the Europeans, because as Jiri Pehe says, *"it is a conflict between a part of post-Communist of Czech society represented by Milos Zeman and the other half, should we say, modern, pro-Western and which simply no longer wants the present head of State."*

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