

Zuzana Caputova, favourite in the second round of the Slovakian presidential election

Corinne Deloy

Results
1st round

Zuzana Caputova (Progressive Slovakia, PS) easily drew ahead in the first round of the presidential election organised on 16th March in Slovakia. She won 40.57% of the vote, distancing herself from Maros Sefcovic, the Vice-President of the European Commission, responsible for Energy, who is backed by the party presently in office in Slovakia, Direction-Social Democracy (SMER-SD), taking 18.66% of the vote. The two candidates will face each other in the second round of the election on 30th March. We might recall that Robert Mistrik, supported by Freedom and Solidarity (Sloboda a Solidarita, SaS) and Together-Civic Democracy (SPOLU) withdrew from the race on 26th February last to everyone's surprise – in support of Zuzana Caputova. *"In any other Central European State, it would be inconceivable to see a politician of conservative conviction relinquishing his place to a woman with progressive liberal ideas,"* wrote the Slovakian daily SME.

Independent candidate and former Justice Minister (2006-2009) and also former president of the Supreme Court (2009-2014), Stefan Harabin came third winning 14.34% of the vote ahead of MP Marian Kotleba, leader of the Kotleba-People's Party-Our Slovakia (L'SNS) who won 10.39% of the vote and Frantisek Miklosko, independent, supported by the Civic Conservative Party (OKS), former member of the Slovakian National Council (1990-1992), (5.72%). The other ten candidates won fewer than 5% of the vote.

Zuzana Caputova won in 71 of Slovakia's 79 electoral constituencies, Maros Sefcovic in 7 and Stefan Harabin in 1. The Progressive Slovakia candidate won 66.9% of the vote in the old town of Bratislava and the European Commissioner 27.51% of the vote in Sobrance, a town in the region of Kosice (east of the country).

Turnout totalled 48.74%, i.e. 5.34 point more than that recorded in the first round of the previous presidential election on 15th March 2014. The highest turnout was recorded in the region of Bratislava (58.88%) and the lowest in Kosice (42%).

According to the survey undertaken by FOCUS, Zuzana Caputova is due to win 64.4% of the vote in the second round and Maros Sefcovic 35.6%. Both candidates must now address the Slovaks who voted for those eliminated in the first round, in a bid to rally them to their cause. According to Vaclav Hrich, an analyst for the pollster AKO, one quarter or even a third of the Slovaks who voted for the eliminated candidates might not turn out to vote on 30th March next.

Results of the first round of the presidential election on 16th March 2019 in Slovakia

Turnout: 48.74%

Candidates	No of votes won	% of votes won
Zuzana Caputova (Progressive Slovakia, PS)	870 415	40.57
Maros Sefcovic	400 379	18.66
Stefan Harabin	307 823	14.34
Marian Kotleba (Kotleba-People's Party-Our Slovakia, L'SNS)	222 935	10.39
Frantisek Miklosko, independent	122 916	5.72
Bela Bugar (Most-Hid)	66 667	3.10
Milan Krajniak (We are a family, AME R)	59 464	2.77
Eduard Chmelar, independent	58 965	2.74
Martin Dano, independent	11 146	0.51
Robert Svec, independent	6 567	0.30
Juraj Zabochnik, independent	6 219	0.30
Ivan Zuzula (Slovakian Conservative Party, SKS)	3 807	0.17
Bohumila Tauchmannova, independent	3 535	0.16
Robert Mistrík, independent	3 318	0.15
Jozsef Menyhart (Hungarian Coalition Party, SMK-MKP)	1 208	0.05

Source : <http://www.volbysr.sk/sk/data01.html>

"I am grateful for the confidence that reflects a call for change," declared Zuzana Caputova on the announcement of the result. "I am going to try to talk with the electorate whose candidate will not be present in the second round. I shall try and win all of those votes. I want to be understandable, authentic and communicate in all areas in which I can see that there are problems for Slovakia and put forward solutions," declared Zuzana Caputova.

Slovakia is at a crossroads in terms of winning back the public's trust," Ms Caputova said just before placing her voting slip in the ballot box in Pezinok (south of the country) after having focused her electoral campaign on this issue. "I have devoted my entire life to helping the most vulnerable. Trust in the legal system must be restored in Slovakia," she maintained during the campaign.

1. Assassination of journalist Jan Kuciak and his partner Martina Kusnirova at the end of February 2018.

"I see these elections in the context of an urgent call for change after the tragic events of last spring1.

Zuzana Caputova was able to take advantage of the indictment on 8th March last of the real estate multi-millionaire Marian Kocner, accused of having ordered the

murder of journalist Jan Kuciak and his partner, Martina Kusnirova at the end of February[2]. However, political analyst and founder of the Public Affairs Institute (IVO) Grigorij Meseznikov believes that *"although this might be considered to legitimise Zuzana Caputova, who represents change, the authorities may have wanted to show with this prosecution how effective the State had been thereby helping Maros Sefcovic gain points."*

Running under the banner *"Always for Slovakia"* Maros Sefcovic promised to work for *"reconciliation in society"* if he was elected head of State and recalled his attachment to Christian values. *"We cannot support steps for the official recognition of homosexual couples nor favour those who would allow the adoption of children by these couples,"* he stressed. Ms Caputova is indeed in favour of extending rights to same-sex couples.

"By voting for Zuzana Caputova, people have called for a positive change in line with the values of liberal democracy," indicated Grigorij Meseznikov. *"Those who want continuity and want Direction-Social Democracy to govern are clearly in the minority, people seem dissatisfied with Slovakia's path under the government of this party,"* he added.

"Zuzana Caputova is attracting those who abhor corruption and who are unhappy with a government, which in their opinion, thinks more about itself than of the interests of the citizens. Maros Sefcovic launched an appeal to those who were satisfied with the progress made by a country, which according to many indicators, has done quite well over the last decade," stressed Kevin Deegan-Krause, professor of political science and specialist of Central Europe at the Wayne State University of Detroit.

Since the start of the campaign Zuzana Caputova has enjoyed the electoral support of the outgoing president of the Republic Andrej Kiska, who decided not to stand for a second term in office. *"It so happens that we want our country to be decent and fair. It is extremely important to continue the fight for an honest Slovakia. Zuzana Caputova is the person who can bring Slovakia out of the crisis. Do not stay at home for the second round. We won the first round, Slovakia is on the right path,"* declared the head of State.

In all likelihood, and unless there is a major surprise, Zuzana Caputova should become President of the Republic of Slovakia on 30th March next.

2. Jan Kuciak was investigating suspected tax fraud and corruption in the political and economic milieus for the website *aktuality.sk*, a site run by the country's leading daily newspaper *Novy cas*. This murder led to the resignation in March 2018 of the Prime Minister in office Robert Fico (SMER-SD) and two of his ministers.

You can read all of our publications on our site:
www.robert-schuman.eu

Publishing Director: Pascale JOANNIN

THE FONDATION ROBERT SCHUMAN, created in 1991 and acknowledged by State decree in 1992, is the main French research centre on Europe. It develops research on the European Union and its policies and promotes the content of these in France, Europe and abroad. It encourages, enriches and stimulates European debate thanks to its research, publications and the organisation of conferences. The Foundation is presided over by Mr. Jean-Dominique Giuliani.