

Corinne Deloy

Results
1st round

Ingrida Simonyte and Gitanas Nauseda face each other on 26th May next for the second round of the presidential election in Lithuania

Ingrida Simonyte, former Finance Minister (2009-2012), came out ahead in the first round of the Presidential election that took place on 12th May in Lithuania. She won 31.21% of the vote just front of her rival, economist Gitanas Nauseda (independent) won 30.93% of the vote. Ingrida Simonyte was standing as an independent, but she has the support of the main opposition party, the Homeland Union-Lithuanian Christian Democrats (TS-LKD).

The two candidates will face each other in the second round on 26th May, the day when the Lithuanians will also be appointing their MEPs. According to political observers, Gitanas Nauseda will win, due his greater scope in terms of the political landscape. "Gitanas Nauseda has more chance of attracting the votes of the other candidates from the first round, notably those on the left," indicated Ramunas Vilpisauskas, Director of the International Relations and Political Science Institute of the University of Vilnius.

Saulius Skvernelis, the present Prime Minister, who was standing as an independent, with the support of the Farmers and Greens Party (LVZS) came third winning 19.67% of the vote. The head of government announced that he would resign from office if he failed. As promised, he will resign on 12th July, the day when the second term in office of outgoing president Dalia Grybauskaitė comes to an end.

"I really thought I could reach the second round, but the results show that my expectations were too high. My failure to enter the second round reflect the esteem in which I am held as a politician. I accept this fact and I have to accept resignation," he declared on the TV channel LRT. Saulius Skvernelis, who according to the

polls was supported by a rural, elderly, poor electorate, said that he had not had enough time to complete his electoral campaign. "I think that we were a few weeks short. We started our campaign quite late. Some mistakes should have been avoided," he stressed, indicating that the opposition of some Lithuanians to the reforms implemented by the government undoubtedly did not help him.

The Farmers and Green Party did not say which of the two candidates, Gitanas Nauseda or Ingrida Simonyte, it would support in the second round.

Vytenis Povilas Andriukaitis (Social Democratic Party LSP), European Commissioner for Healthcare and Food Safety and former Healthcare Minister (2012-2014), came fourth in the election with 4.79% of the vote. He was followed by Arvydas Juozaitis (independent), who won 4.69% of the vote, Valdemar Tomasevski, chair of the Electoral Action by the Poles of Lithuania (LLRA), won 3.98% of the vote and MP Mindaugas Puidokas (2.58%). The two other candidates won under 1% of the vote.

Turnout totalled 56.45%, i.e. +4.22 points in comparison with that recorded during the first round of the previous presidential election on 11th May 2014.

Results of the first round of the Presidential election on 12th May 2019 in Lithuania

Turnout: 56.45%

Candidates	Number of votes won (1st round)	% of votes won (1st round)
Ingrida Simonyte (independent)	438 754	31.21
Gitanas Nauseda (independent)	436 107	30.93
Saulius Skvernelis (Farmers and Greens Party LVZS)	277 928	19.67
Vytenis Povilas Andriukaitis (Social Democratic Party, LSP)	67 539	4.79
Arvydas Juozaitis (independent)	66 098	4.69
Valdemar Tomasevski (Electoral Action of the Poles of Lithuania LLRA)	56 381	3.98
Mindaugas Puidokas (independent)	36 345	2.58
Naglis Puteikis (Centre Party, LCP)	11 138	0.79
Valentinas Mazuronis (independent)	9 138	0.65

Source: Lithuanian Electoral Commission <https://www.vrk.lt/2019-prezidento/rezultatai?srcUrl=/rinkimai/904/1/1546/rezultatai/lt/rezultatai-PreRezultatai.html>

The presidential campaign was dominated by the issue of social inequality, which is increasing in Lithuania despite strong GDP growth (2.7% expected this year). The poverty rate is one of the highest in the EU due to an ill adapted tax system. *"The Lithuanians thirst for social justice and are looking for a candidate who can overcome the polarisation of today's society,"* indicated Donatas Puslys of the Political Analysis Institute in Vilnius.

Ingrida Simonyte stressed that the future president will have to *"listen to people with different opinions, seek consensus and represent Lithuania correctly abroad."* She promised to reduce the economic gap between the rural and urban areas thanks to growth stimulation. She also promised to resist populism. According to political expert Aine Ramonaite, *"Ingrida Simonyte is attracting young, pro-Western and liberal voters, which is surprising given her political leanings."*

Gitanas Nauseda hopes to embody the political happy medium and build a social State. *"I want to thank those who embraced our message regarding the welfare State and the increase in political peace that we want for Lithuania,"* he declared when the first results were announced.

The economist hopes to counter social injustice everywhere in the country. He is promoting the advantages he enjoys given his independence and the fact that he does not belong to the political world. *"This independence helps you invite representatives from different political parties to sit at one table, to provide them with greater confidence and to calm their prejudices somewhat,"* declared Gitanas Nauseda, who says he feels that *"he has a heavy responsibility in reducing political polarisation in the country."*

Both candidates are fervent supporters of the EU and NATO. According to Ramunas Vilpisauskas, the political line in terms of foreign policy and defence should not be modified whichever candidate is elected to the presidency of the Republic on 26th May next. *"With Gitanas Nauseda, there might be some tactical changes regarding communication with our neighbours, but there is little chance that the strategic line will change,"* he indicated.

On 12th May the Lithuanians also voted on two referendum issues. The first involved the possibility for a Lithuanian citizen who adopts the nationality of another country to retain his or her Lithuanian citizenship, the second focused on the reduction of the number of MPs from 141 to 121.

Both issues easily gained the approval of the electorate (respectively 73.38% and 76.16%) but the referendum did not fulfil the three vital conditions for them to be declared valid, i.e. winning an absolute majority of the votes cast, with this representing at least one third of the total of those registered and participation by at least halve of those registered.

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.