

European
Elections monitor

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ANALYSIS

First round of the Czech presidential election on 13-14 January 2023: 3 out of 9 candidates are running neck and neck

8.4 million Czech voters are expected to cast their ballots on 13 and 14 January 2023 for the first round of the presidential election. They will elect the country's fourth president after Vaclav Havel (1993-2003), Vaclav Klaus (2003-2013) and Milos Zeman (2013-2023). Voting traditionally takes place over two days: it starts on Friday at 2pm and ends on Saturday at the same time, with polling stations closing between 10pm on Friday and 8am on Saturday. If no candidate obtains more than half of the votes on 14 January, a second round will be held on 27 and 28 January between the two candidates who came first in the first round.

THE CANDIDATES

9 people are officially candidates:

- Andrej Babis (ANO which stands for both "yes" and Dissatisfied Citizens' Action), former Prime Minister (2017-2021) ;
- Petr Pavel, independent, former chairman of the NATO military committee and former chief of staff (2012-2015), is running with the slogan "bring order and calm";
- Danuse Nerudova, independent, economist, former rector of Tomas Masaryk University in Brno. She headed a national committee on fair pensions and was an informal advisor to the government during the Covid-19 health crisis;
- Pavel Fischer, independent, senator, former ambassador of the Czech Republic to France (2003-2010) and former director of the STEM Institute, has adopted the slogan " First place for the Czech Republic ". He was a candidate in the

presidential elections of 12-13 and 26-27 January 2018, where he won 10.23% of the votes in the first round;

- Marek Hilser, independent, doctor and senator, also competed in the previous presidential election of 2018 where he secured 8.84% of the vote;
- Josef Stredula, independent, president of the Confederation of Trade Unions of Bohemia and Moravia since 2014, supported by the Social Democratic Party (CSSD);
- Denisa Rohanova, independent, chairwoman of the Association for the Defence of Overindebted People;
- Jaroslav Basta (Freedom and Direct Democracy, SPD), MP and former ambassador to Russia (2000-2005) and Ukraine (2007-2010);
- Tomas Zima, independent, former rector of Charles University in Prague.

THE FORCES AT PLAY

According to the latest opinion poll conducted by the Median Institute, Danuse Nerudova will lead in the first round with 28% of the vote; she seems to be attracting the vote of the most progressive and youngest in the electorate to her name. She is due to be followed by Andrej Babis, 26.5%, and Petr Pavel, 23.5%. Pavel Fischer is forecast to win 5.5% of the vote. The 5 other candidates are due to get under 5% of the vote.

The Spolu (Together) coalition, which includes Prime Minister Petr Fiala's Civic Democratic Party (ODS), the

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Christian Democratic Union-People's Party (KDU-CSL) and Tradition, Responsibility, Prosperity 09 (TOP 09), is supporting three candidates: Petr Pavel, Danuse Nerudova and Pavel Fischer. However, the head of government expressed his personal preference for Petr Pavel.

The outgoing President of the Republic, Milos Zeman, has declared that he would like to see Andrej Babis succeed him in Prague Castle, the official residence of the Czech President. Babis has the advantage of being very well known, but this advantage has a downside: he is also one of the most hated politicians in the Czech Republic.

Andrej Babis is under criminal investigation on charges of fraud and wilful damage to the financial interests of the European Union for taking the Stork's Nest, an ultra-modern agricultural complex with a farm, hotel and zoo near Prague, out of his Agrofert Group, which specialises in food, chemicals and the media, so that it would be eligible for a €2 million European grant intended for small businesses. The capital of the Stork's Nest was transferred to anonymous shareholders, which is prohibited in the Czech Republic.

Prime Minister Petr Fiala has accused Andrej Babis of running for president in an attempt to gain temporary immunity from prosecution. For the time being, Andrej Babis has refused to take part in any debate organised as part of the election campaign.

THE PRESIDENTIAL OFFICE IN THE CZECH REPUBLIC

The Head of State represents the Czech Republic abroad. He negotiates and ratifies international treaties and is the head of the armed forces. He has the power to refer a bill to parliament, except those of a constitutional nature. The President of the Republic appoints the judges of the Constitutional Court, its President and Vice-Presidents and the members of the Banking Council of the Central Bank.

The Senate may, with the approval of the Chamber of Deputies, file a complaint against the Head of State before the Constitutional Court, not only for treason but also if the upper house considers that the President of the Republic has violated the Constitution or the constitutional order. However, such a complaint requires the approval of three-fifths of the senators and two-thirds of the deputies.

The Czech Head of State has been elected by direct universal suffrage since 1 October 2012. To stand for president, a candidate must be at least 40 years old and have the support of at least 20 deputies, at least 10 senators or the signatures of 50,000 voters.

The mandate of the current President of the Republic Milos Zeman will end on 8 March 2023. The new head of state is expected to be sworn in on 9 March.

Reminder of the results of the presidential elections of 12-13 and 26-27 January 2018 in the Czech Republic

Turnout: 61.88% (1st round) and 66.57% (2nd round)

Candidates	Number of votes won (1st round)	Percentage of votes obtained (1st round)	Number of votes won (2nd round)	Percentage of votes obtained (2nd round)
Milos Zeman (Citizens' Rights Party, SPOZ)	1 985 547	38.57	2 853 390	51.37
Jiri Drahos (independent)	1 369 601	26.60	2701 206	48.63
Pavel Fischer (independent)	526 694	10.23		
Michal Horacek (independent)	472,643	9.18		
Marek Hilser (independent)	454 949	8.84		
Mirek Topolanek (independent)	221 689	4.31		
Jiri Hynek (independent)	63 348	1.23		
Petr Hannig (Common Sense Party)	29 228	0.57		
Vratislav Kulhanek (independent)	24 442	0.47		

Source : [Czech Electoral Commission](#)

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