

European
Elections monitorfrom Corinne Deloy
translated by Helen Levy

RESULTS

Vladimir Putin wins back the presidency of the Federation of Russia

Unsurprisingly outgoing Prime Minister Vladimir Putin (United Russia ER) was elected in the first round as president of the Federation of Russia with 63.6% of the vote. Guenady Zyuganov (Communist Party- KPRF) came second with 17.18% of the vote. He is followed by Vladimir Jirinovski, who won 7.98% of the vote and businessman Mikhail Prokhorov (Just Cause, PD) who won 6.22%. Finally the former leader of Fair Russia (SR) Serguey Mironov won 3.85% of the vote. We should remember that the presidential mandate is now six years in Russia. Vladimir Putin will be head of State until 2018.

Nearly 2/3 of the Russians turned out to vote: 65.25%, which is slightly more than the figure recorded in the last presidential election on 2nd March 2008 (+ 1.47 points).

A great number of infringements were denounced, notably ballot stuffing, the massive transport of voters and various types of manipulation during vote counting. Communist Guenady Zyuganov spoke of a *"thieves' election, which was totally illegitimate, dishonest and opaque"*. After having voted he stressed that if Vladimir Putin won around 60% of the vote it would be proof that the vote had been rigged. *"Any reasonable person can understand that this is impossible without cheating, without stealing votes,"* he maintained.

The result, which had been expected, was not the real issue at stake in the Russian presidential election. Indeed uncertainty reigns over the nature of Vladimir Putin's third mandate as head of Russia. After the demonstrations that followed the general elections on 4th December last won by the party in office, United Russia, everyone wonders how the new president of the Federation will manage the discontent of the population that has emerged over the last few weeks, firstly in criticism over the electoral fraud, and then more widely in request of Vladimir Putin's departure.

During his electoral campaign the leader of United Russia promised everything to everyone, for example he announced the raising of teachers', doctors' and policemen's wages, the raising of pensions, student grants and family allowances, the increase of defence and police force budgets. However Russia has not been spared the international economic crisis. Gas and oil prices, which are some of the country's major resources, are decreasing, and Vladimir Putin will find it hard to raise public spending which already lies at 40% of the GDP.

To win the presidential election on 4th March the outgoing Prime Minister played his usual tune: the fear of a return to the chaos of the 1990's. Unusually he explained his programme, an all time first in Russian electoral history. The man, who is authoritarian and who has succeeded in eliminating all opposition over the last few years, places great worth on his varnish of legitimacy and struggles not to be compared to dictators like Aleksandr Lukashenka in

Belarus or Bachar el Assad in Syria. From a political point of view he says he is ready to think about how to relax the laws governing the registration of political parties and has called for the restoration – under certain conditions – of the election of the regional governors – appointed by the government in office – which he abolished himself during his first mandate as head of the Federation of Russia (2000-2004). Finally United Russia's candidate promised to fight to counter corruption. *"Vladimir Putin cannot counter corruption. This would oblige him to cut into his entourage. Whilst his popularity is declining he will not wage war in his own camp,"* said political analyst Mark Urnov at the Higher School for Economy.

According to a poll undertaken by the Levada Centre and published at the end of December 2011, three quarters of the Russians (73%) said they were dissatisfied with the government policy. Russian society has transformed since Putin first took office 12 years ago. Some of the population has grown richer. Better educated it is now more demanding. The Russian middle class increasingly rejects the political game played by Mr Putin's men in which the economy only benefits the oligarchs. *"We are not moving towards stability but towards stagnation: the economy is not developing and the system is not effective,"* declares political analyst, Aleksandr Konovalov at the Institute for Strategic Expertise in Moscow. *"The hope or the illusion that a system like this, which is totally centralised and authoritarian, can guarantee stable economic development long term is slowly dying,"* indicates Lev Gudkov,

Presidential election in Russia

4th March 2012

director of the Levada Centre. *"The next mandate could be a tragic one for Vladimir Putin. He will have to settle a great number of socio-economic issues and if he wants to settle them he may lose the support of his electorate,"* stresses Igor Bunin, head of the Centre for Political Technology in Moscow.

In the face of this situation Vladimir Putin has but one alternative: the repression of the demonstrations and the tightening of authoritarian trends and the closure of the regime or an opening up via reforms in a move towards pluralisation and decentralisation of the political arena. Although few analysts believe the imminence of a revolution in their country few also imagine that Putin's regime will last without reform.

After the presidential election (and even before the announcement of the results) many of Putin's supporters rallied in the Carousel Square near the Kremlin in Moscow to show their support to the new president of the Federation. *"I promised you we would win. We*

have won. Glory to Russia!" declared the new head of State who added *"we won an open, honest and impartial fight. Our voters know the difference between the desire for renewal and political provocation, whose aim it is to destroy our State. The Russian people have clearly pushed back attempts made by its enemies who tried to destroy the State and usurp power. Today the people have shown that scenario like this will not become a reality here. We have proven that no one can divide us and that no one can force anything upon us. Nothing and no one! They will not win! This presidential election was a test. We have won,"* declared Mr Putin.

The opposition has called for a rally on 5th March in Lubyanka Square in Moscow, opposite the HQ of the Federal Security Service (FSB, formerly the KGB).

Vladimir Putin won the election on 4th March. Will he emerge victorious from his third term in office as head of the Federation of Russia?

Results of the Presidential Election on March 4th 2012 in Russia

Turnout: 65.25%

Candidates	No. of votes won	% of votes won
Vladimir Putin (United Russia, ER)	45 513 001	63.6
Guenady Zyuganov (Communist Party, KPRF)	12 288 624	17.18
Vladimir Jirinovski (Democratic Liberal Party, LDPR)	5 680 558	7.98
Sergueï Mironov (Fair Russia, SR)	4 448 959	6.22
Mikhaïl Prokhorov (Juste Cause, PD)	2 755 642	3.85

Source : Internet Site of the Central Electoral Commission of Russia (http://www.vybory.izbirkom.ru/region/region/izbirkom?action=show&root=1&tvd=100100031793509&vrn=100100031793505®ion=0&global=1&sub_region=0&prver=0&pronetvd=null&vibid=100100031793509&type=226)

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