

Outgoing President Danilo Türk running favourite in the Presidential election in Slovenia

Corinne Deloy

Translated by helen Levy

Analysis
1 month before
the poll

1.7 million Slovenians will be voting on 11th November to appoint the next President of the Republic. If no candidate wins the absolute majority in the first round of voting a second round will be organised on 2nd December. The official campaign started on 12th October and will end on 9th November, on the eve of the election.

For a time Slovenia was the best performer amongst the twelve Member States that entered the EU in the 21st century, but it has been sorely tried by the international crisis notably because of its dependency on foreign capital and exports. The previous government (2008-2011) led by Borut Pahor (Social Democratic Party SD) just like the present one, led by Janez Jansa (Democratic Party, SDS), have both undertaken austerity measures in a bid to revive the economy. The country's rating has been downgraded by the ratings agencies: the banks are struggling; unemployment is affecting 11.7% of the working population (last July's figure) and many analysts believe that Ljubljana might be the sixth European capital to have to resort to international aid. Prime Minister Janez Jansa has spoken of the possibility of a "Greek type scenario". A poll published by the daily Delo on 24th September last revealed that 42% of the Slovenians think that their country would be forced to resort to international aid.

Slovenia has also been troubled by several scandal: on 5th September last the CEO of one of the country's biggest companies was accused of fraud; former MP Pavel Rupar (SDS) was sentenced in September to one year in prison and a 40,000€ fine for abuse of power when he was mayor of Trzic in 2004; the mayor of Ljubljana and leader of the main opposition party, Positive Slovenia (PS), Zoran Janovic, has been accused of involvement in a financial scandal with his two sons Jure and Damijan (to a total of 10 million €) regarding the building of the sporting complex in Stozice that was inaugurated in the capital in August 2010. Finally Prime Minister Janez Jansa is being prosecuted for false accusation and defamation in the Patria scan-

dal in which he is suspected of corruption. He is accused of having received around 900,000€ in bribes from Austrian businessman in support of his party during the purchase of 135 armoured vehicles in 2006 (he was Prime Minister at the time) by the Defence Minister to a total of 278 million € from the manufacturer Patria, a company that is owned to a total of 73% by the Finnish State (EADS owns 27% of it). Even the Catholic Church has been affected by several financial and sexual scandals.

The Presidential Office

The head of State is elected in Slovenia by direct universal suffrage and by a majority vote (in two rounds) for a 5 year mandate that is renewable once. The presidential office is mainly honorary. The President of the Republic is the commander of the armed forces, he can intervene if the Drzavni Zbor (National Assembly), the lower chamber of Parliament, is prevented from meeting and he can declare a state of emergency and also mobilise the army. However his decisions have to be ratified by parliament as soon as it can convene again. The Head of State appoints some of the State's high ranking executives and the Ambassadors; he also has the right to pardon.

All candidates running in the presidential have to be aged 18 and have the support of at least 10 MPs or 5,000 voters or of a political party, which has to have the support of 3 MPs and 3000 voters.

Since the country's independence on 25th June 1991, the Presidents of the Republic of Slovenia have all been from the leftwing.

Reminder of the Presidential Election Results on 21st October and 11th November 2007

Turnout: 57.67% (1st round) and 58.46% (2nd round)

Candidates	No. of votes won (1st round)	% of votes won (1st round)	No. of votes won (2nd round)	% of votes won (2nd round)
Danilo Türk (Social Democratic Party, SD, Democratic Pensioners' Party, DeSUS and Zares, Z)	241 349	24.47	677 333	68.03
Alojz Peterle (New Slovenia-People's Christian Party, Nsi, Democratic Party, SDS, and People's Party, SLS)	283 412	28.73	318 288	31.97
Mitja Gaspari (Liberal Democratic Party, LDS)	237 632	24.09		
Zmago Jelincic Plemeniti (National Party, SNS)	188 951	19.16		
Darko Krajnc (Youth Party, SMS)	21 526	2.18		
Elena Pecaric (Akacije)	8 830	0.89		
Monika Piberl (Women's Voice)	4 729	0.48		

Source : Internet site of the electoral results of Slovenia (<http://volitve.gov.si/vp2007/index.html>)

On several occasions some parties have tried – in vain – to extend the office or the means of election of the President of the Republic. Hence, Zares (Real) said that it wanted the Head of State to be allowed to convene by-elections and dissolve parliament; New Slovenia (NSi) suggested that the president of the Republic be elected indirectly by the majority of two-thirds of the Drzavni Zbor.

The Candidates

13 people have expressed their desire run for the presidency. Amongst these only three have made the request official:

- Danilo Türk, 55 years old, the outgoing Head of State who is supported by Positive Slovenia (PS), the country's main opposition party, and the Democratic Pensioners' Party (DeSUS) led by Karl Erjavec;
- Milan Zver, 50 years old, MEP, former Education and Sports Minister (2004-2008), who has the support of the Democratic Party (SDS) led by Prime Minister Janez Jansa and New Slovenia-People's Christian Party (NSi-KLS) led by Ljudmila Novak;
- Borut Pahor, 49 years old, former Prime Minister supported by the Social Democratic Party (SD) and by the Citizens' List (DL) led by Gregor Virant, member of the present government.

Amongst these three candidates Milan Zver is the only one to be standing for the Slovenian vote with the support of other MPs. The other two preferred to seek voter support rather than that of the political parties: Danilo Türk presented 13,000 voters' signatures and Borut Pahor, 4,453.

The presidential candidates have until 17th October to register their official status. The official list of candidates will be published on 26th October next.

The Start of the Presidential Campaign

Outgoing head of State Danilo Türk launched his campaign on 12th October in Ljubljana. He is standing as an independent and is using his achievements as head of State in his support. His rival Milan Zver qualifies him however as "*the far left candidate*" because of the support he enjoys from Positive Slovenia. Danilo Türk said that in his opinion the head of State had to be able to provide those who most needed it with the best advice, at present this meant the government. He has chosen the slogan "*For the common good*" for his electoral campaign.

On 12th October Milan Zver achieved the support of the chairman of the European People's Party, (EPP), Wilfried Martens. "*The Presidential election has to be a time of change. The country needs a head of State who*

can unite the Slovenians," declared Wilfried Martens. The Democratic Party candidate and that of New Slovenia- Christian People's Party accuses the outgoing President of the Republic of being against the inclusion of the "golden rule" (limit of the country's public deficit) in the Slovenian Constitution, of being against labour market flexibility, the reform of retirement pensions and austerity.

Milan Zver is campaigning under the banner "A president with greater vision". If he is elected as the head of Slovenia on 11th November or on 2nd December next he would be the first head of State not to be a former member of the Communist Party, a fact which he highlights standing as "the only possible choice for the country to be able to complete its transition."

Borut Pahor is calling for "national unity" to implement "structural reform so that the worst economic crisis since the Second World War can be overcome." He compares the present situation with the time when Slovenia became independent again in 1991, "a narrow

window of opportunity which we managed to come through by standing together." He is standing as the centre-left candidate in order to distinguish himself better from outgoing President Danilo Türk.

According to the most recent poll published by the daily Delo on October 1st Danilo Türk is due to win in the first round of the presidential election on 11th November next with 54% of the vote. He is due to pull ahead of Social Democrat Borut Pahor, who is forecast to win 30% of the vote and MEP Milan Zver, who is forecast to take 13% of the vote. The polls for the second round forecast Danilo Türk as the winner with 52% of the vote ahead of Borut Pahor or with 60% if he faces Milan Zver.

The outgoing President who is the main favourite in the election will certainly remember Alojz Peterle's position during the last presidential campaign on 21st October and 11th November 2007 before he was beaten (68.03%) by Danilo Türk in the 2nd round.

Social Democrat Borut Pahor created a surprise by coming first in the first round of voting in the Slovenia Presidential Election.

Former Prime Minister (2008-2011) Borut Pahor (SD), supported by the Citizens' List (DL), a member of the rightwing coalition in office created a surprise in the first round of the presidential election that took place on 11th November in Slovenia. He came out ahead with 40% of the vote. He drew ahead of outgoing Head of State and the Slovenians' favourite politician – Danilo Türk – who is supported by Positive Slovenia (PS), the main opposition party led by Zoran Jankovic and by Karl Erjavec's Democratic Pensioners' Party (DeSUS), who won 35.83% of the vote. Milan Zver, who was supported by the Democratic Party (SDS) led by Prime Minister Janez Jansa and New Slovenia/ People's Christian Party (NSi-KLS) led by Ljudmila Novak, came 3rd with 24.16%.

Turnout, which was the lowest ever recorded in a presidential election rose to 47.68%, i.e. -10 points in comparison with the first round of the presidential election on 21st October 2007.

Danilo Türk had however been forecast easily ahead in all of the polls. He achieved his highest score in the two constituencies of Ljubljana (42.4% in the centre and 38.7% in Ljubljana Bežigrad). Borut Pahor came out first in the six other constituencies in the country. "My score goes well beyond what I had hoped for. I believe that the message in this vote is clear: together we can do more

than we dare to imagine," declared Borut Pahor, adding, "you have shown exceptional trust in me which inspires me to continue. As president of the Republic I will go beyond your expectations" (B. Pahor's government was overthrown on 20th September 2011 by a motion of censure against his reform of retirement pensions and the labour market).

Results
1st round

Results of the first round of voting in the Presidential election on 11th November 2012 in Slovenia

Turnout: 47.68%

Candidates	% of votes won
Borut Pahor (Social Democratic Party, SD)	40.01
Danilo Türk	35.83
Milan Zver (Democratic Party, SDS)	24.16

Source : <http://www.dvk-rs.si/index.php/si/>

Although the presidential function is mainly honorary in Slovenia voters wanted to show however their concern and expressed their lack of confidence in the future. Slovenia, which for a long time was top of the class in the EU in the 21st century, is now suffering greatly due to the international economic crisis, notably because of its dependency on foreign capital and exports. Its public debt has risen significantly from 23.4% of the GDP (2007) to 47.6% (2011). Unemployment is affecting 11.6% of Slovenians (August 2012). The country's main unions have also called for demonstrations on 17th November against austerity and notably against wage decreases for civil servants and reductions in social aid. Ljubljana is forecast to undergo a recession of 2.3% in 2012 and 1.6% next year according to the latest figures released by the European Commission.

On 6th November the ratings agency Standard & Poor's placed the country's long term sovereign rating under negative watch. *"Slovenia's long term sovereign rating, at present in A, will be taken down a notch if the Constitutional Court allows the organisation of a referendum on the law introducing a holding to manage state enterprises,"* indicated the agency.

The Slovenian Parliament approved the bill introducing the holding to manage state enterprises on 28th September and on 23rd October a bad bank was created to absorb the State banks' non-performing loans. 30 MPs from the Slovenian opposition party Positive Slovenia put in a request a week later for a referendum to be organised on each of these laws. The one governing the creation of a holding was accepted but the leader of Parliament, Gregor Virant (DL) rejected the one concerning the law creating a bad bank due to the fact that some signatures put forward were not the originals (40,000 voters' signatures have to be collated to achieve the organisation of a referendum).

The government appealed to the Constitutional Court, which will decide on the issue in December.

Finally Prime Minister Janez Jansa is at present negotiating a reform with social partners concerning the retirement system and the labour market. The Slovenian State has to save 800 million € in 2012 and 950 million the following year.

"It is only the first round and it is a warning to the political classes by the electorate which is disappointed by our policy," declared outgoing President Danilo Türk. *"By the 2nd round I shall have done everything to show the conceptual differences between myself and my rival,"* he added. Danilo Türk explained his result via the low turnout rate. The outgoing Head of State has always wanted to lie above the political splits but from the start of his mandate he stood against Prime Minister Janez Jansa. He refused to approve the appointment of the former Foreign Minister, Dimitrij Rupel, as Slovenia's new ambassador to Italy.

The battle between the two men will never be settled. Last January after the general elections on 4th December 2011 Danilo Türk maintained that Janez Jansa, who was being prosecuted in the Patria affair, did not have the necessary legitimacy to form a government.

Danilo Türk and Borut Pahor will be facing each other in the second round on 2nd December next and for the first time in a Presidential election the Slovenians will have to choose between two leftwing candidates.

Prime Minister Janez Jansa has called on the Slovenians to vote for *"one of the two candidates who supports reform, notably in terms of the retirement system and the banks,"* a call which implies supporting Borut Pahor.

According to the first poll published after 11th November two thirds of Milan Zver's voters (65%) are about to vote for Borut Pahor in the second round.

Borut Pahor is elected President of the Republic of Slovenia

Results
2nd round

Borut Pahor (Social Democratic Party, SD) won the 2nd round of the presidential election on 2nd December in Slovenia. Former Prime Minister (2008-2011) won 67.44% of the vote and easily pulled ahead of the outgoing Head of State, Danilo Türk, who won 32.56%. Turnout was the lowest ever since the country's independence in 1991: it totalled 41.95%, i.e. 16.51 points less in comparison with the second round of the presidential election on 11th November 2007. It totalled 48.24% in the first round on 11th November last.

Results of the Presidential Election on 11th November and 2nd December in Slovenia

Turnout: 48.24% (1st round) and 41,95% (2nd round)

Candidates	Number of votes won (1st round)	(%) of votes won (1st round)	Number of votes won (2nd round)	(%) of votes won (2nd round)
Borut Pahor (Social Democratic Party, SD)	325 406	39.93	474 309	67.44
Danilo Türk	292 547	36.90	228 980	32.56
Milan Zver (Democratic Party, SDS)	197 042	24.18		

Source : Internet site of the elections in Slovenia (<http://volitve.gov.si/vp2012/>)

"This victory is the start of new hope, of a new era," declared Borut Pahor. He called for "mutual confidence, respect and tolerance," adding "although our differences are great what brings us together is stronger." He set the goal of "rallying the right wing majority and the left opposition in a country that is suffering a social and economic crisis in order to put Slovenia back on the path of growth."

The former Prime Minister supported the austerity reforms of Janez Jansa's government (Democratic Party SDS): "We can no longer waste time speculating about alternative solutions. We must work now with the government on the decisions that have to be taken. I am not the government's lawyer but as the future president of the republic I think it is my duty not to criticise it," stressed Borut Pahor, who warned against the fact that "the collapse of the government would lead to chaos."

Although in Slovenia the President of the Republic has but honorary power, the country which is experiencing a serious crisis, should however benefit from the work undertaken by the head of State and the Prime Minister together. "Borut Pahor's victory is a good sign for the international financial markets because he implemented several reforms when he was Prime Minister

and he supports the government's austerity policy led by Janez Jansa," stressed Matevz Tomsic, of the Social Studies Department of Nova Gorica.

Between the two rounds of the presidential election the atmosphere was marked by the anger of a part of the population. Indeed Slovenia, after having been one of the best of the 12 new member states which entered the EU in the 21st century, is now extremely affected by the economic crisis. The country was downgraded by the ratings agencies last summer, notably because of the fragility of its banking system (the government is planning now to sell some of the shares that the State owns (25%) in the country's biggest bank, Nova Ljubljanska Banka). Unemployment totals 11.6% of the working population and many analysts believe that Ljubljana might be the 6th European capital to have to turn to international aid. Prime Minister Janez Jansa, whose government has taken a number of austerity measures (reduction in civil servants' salaries, retirement pensions and certain social benefits) in view of reviving the economy so as to reduce the budgetary deficit which rose to 6.4% in 2011 – down to 4.2% of the GDP in 2012 and to 3% the following year, mentioned the possibility of a "Greek scenario" just a few weeks ago. Slovenia entered into recession on 30th

Presidential election in Slovenia 11th November and 2nd December 2012

November recording a second consecutive contraction in its GDP (-0.6% in the 3rd quarter). The EU is anticipating a recession of 2.3% in 2012 and 1.6% in 2013. Slovenia has also been rocked by several corruption scandals (conviction of Pavel Rupa, CEO of one of the country's biggest companies to one year in prison and a 40,000€ fine for abuse of power; the challenge made to the Mayor of Ljubljana and leader of the main opposition party, Slovenia Positive (PS), Zoran Jankovic, and his two sons, in a financial affair (to a total of 10 million €) involving the construction of the sporting complex of Stozice inaugurated in August 2010 in the capital).

30,000 people demonstrated against economic austerity on 17th November answering the call of the unions brandishing the slogan "*We want to live not survive*". More than 50,000 were in the streets of Ljubljana on 30th November to show their discontent about the political elites to cries of "*Gotov je*" (that's enough) or "*Gotovi so!*" (they're finished). In Maribor on 26th November 6,000 demonstrators asked for the resignation of the Mayor Franc Kangler (People's Party SLS) who is suspected of corruption. Other rallies took place in Koper, Nova Gorica and Novo Mesto.

The Return of Borut Pahor

Aged 49, Borut Pahor comes from Postojna. A graduate in sociology, political science and journalism from the University of Ljubljana he joined the United

List of Social Democrats (ZLSD) in 1993 after having been a member of the Communist League of Slovenia. He then became chair of the party in 1997, re-elected in 2001 and 2005, the year in which he changed the party's name to the Social Democratic Party (SD). He was replaced as head of the party in June last by Igor Luksic, who only won by 10 votes.

Elected MP for the first time in 1990 Borut Pahor was re-elected two years later then again in 1996 and 2000. In 2004 he was elected to the European Parliament.

After the SD's victory in the general elections on 21st September 2008, Borut Pahor became Prime Minister. His government coalition formed with Zares (Z), the Democratic Liberal Party (LDS) and the Democratic Party of Pensioners (DeSUS), crumbled as the reforms were undertaken and the failure to win four referenda organised in 2011 (on the introduction of a new labour contract for the unemployed, students and the retired; on the extension of working hours; the change in the financing of pensions, enhancement of measures against illegal work and the change in the law on the opening of the secret service's archives). On 21st September 2011 the Slovenian parliament rejected the motion of confidence put forward by Borut Pahor's minority government which led to early general elections in which the Social Democrats suffered a severe defeat (10% of the vote).

With the presidential election on 11th November and 2nd December Borut Pahor has made a comeback, which is as unexpected as it is triumphant.

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