

# The second round of the presidential election will be tighter than forecast in Croatia

## Abstract :

The outgoing President of the Republic of Croatia Ivo Josipovic (Social Democratic Party, SDP) came out ahead in the first round of the presidential election on 28th December. He won 38.46% of the vote and took the lead over former European Integration Minister (2003-2005) and Foreign Minister and European Integration Minister (2005-2008), present deputy of NATO's Secretary General responsible for Public Information, Kolinda Grabar-Kitarovic (Croatian Democratic Union, HDZ), who won 37.22% of the vote.

However the lead of the outgoing Head of State is weaker than that forecast in the polls before the first round which made him the favourite in the presidential election. The two candidates will face each other in a second, more uncertain than expected, round on 11th January.

Ivan-Vilibor Sincic, of the NGO Zivi Zid (Human Shield), committed to the support of the poorly housed, and standing as "an anarchist candidate", who focused his campaign against corruption, "the debt trap" and for the return of Croatia's monetary sovereignty (*I am not against the European Union but I want it to be reformed: we do not want a union of bankers,* he repeats) was the source of surprise as he took third place with 16.42% of the vote. Finally Milan Kujundzic

(Croatian Dawn, HZ), the candidate of a group of eight right-wing parties called the Alliance for Croatia, won 6.3% of the vote.

3,779,281 Croats were called to ballot in 6,260 polling stations within Croatia and in 90 in 50 other countries. Turnout totalled 47.14% ie +3.18 points in comparison with the first round of the presidential election on 27th December 2009.

## Results of the first round of the Presidential election on 28th December 2014 in Croatia

Turnout: 47.14%

| Candidates   | No of votes won (1st round) | % of votes won (1st round) |
|--|-----------------------------|----------------------------|
| <b>Ivo Josipovic Social Democratic Party, SDP)</b>               | 687 558                     | 38,46                      |
| <b>Kolinda Grabar-Kitarovic (Croatian Democratic Union, HDZ)</b> | 665 309                     | 37,22                      |
| <b>Ivan-Vilibor Sincic (Zivi Zid)</b>                            | 293 562                     | 16,42                      |
| <b>Milan Kujundzic (Croatian Dawn-People's Party, HZ)</b>        | 112 581                     | 6,30                       |

Source: Croatian Electoral Commission [http://www.izbori.hr/106pre/rezult/1/html/r\\_00\\_0000\\_000.html?t=1419850892042](http://www.izbori.hr/106pre/rezult/1/html/r_00_0000_000.html?t=1419850892042)

"I based my first mandate on two main goals: social justice and Croatia's entry into the European Union," repeated Ivo Josipovic during his electoral campaign. He said that "without the reform of the States, the civil service and the judicial system no economic revival would be possible" adding "I can guarantee a path to

security, freedom, human rights, the right to healthcare, education, social security, consumption and energy." The outgoing president who is the country's most popular political figure, has suffered because of Croatia's poor economic situation. He has promised to improve the latter and to "create a job for every young person."

Croatia has been in recession for the last six years and is suffering from an oversized, costly public sector, a lack of budgetary discipline (in 2013, the government debt was twice that of 2008) and low competitiveness. The unemployment rate which totalled 13.7% in 2012 now totals 17.7%. The tourist sector, a major financial resource for Croatia, did not do well in 2014 because of the poor weather conditions and the lack of Russian tourists, a consequence of the sanctions taken by the EU against Moscow. These sanctions have forced Zoran Milanovic's (SPD) government to postpone major investment projects in the energy sector.

During a televised debate broadcast on the TV channel Nova Ivo Josipovic stressed that if he were to be re-elected he would immediately put forward a modification to the Constitution. He wants to amend the Fundamental Law so that citizens can ask for an issue to be debated in Parliament (on condition that it has rallied 10,000 signatures at least). He also wants to change the legislative voting method and suggests a mixed system whereby half of the MPs are appointed by a majority vote and the other half according to a proportional list (with a preferential vote). Finally, Ivo Josipovic wants Croatia, which is divided into 20 counties at present, to be divided into 5 to 8 regions. He said that if parliament did not accept the changes he was putting forward he would turn to the electorate and organise a referendum on his suggestions.

Kolinda Grabar Kitarovic has criticised the outgoing president whom she accused of having failed to push the government to approve economic reforms. *"Ivo Josipovic has not explained why he has not used his presidential powers to push things along. He bears the responsibility, with the government, for the serious situation in which Croatia finds itself because he has remained silent and has not acted,"* she maintained. *"We need courageous authorities, who stand firm and who are able to lead the country forwards and not towards disaster,"* she declared as the results of the first round were announced. She also stood as the defender of all Croats stressing that the Croats of Bosnia-Herzegovina were part of the population and maintained that she wanted to do away with the barriers that exist between them and the Croats in Croatia. *"Zagreb's membership of the EU must benefit all of the Croatian people. It will not be the case as long as all Croats are not treated equally,"* she declared.

*"I still think that Ivo Josipovic can win the second round if his campaign team doubles its efforts, even though this will be tighter than I expected,"* declared Zljko Trkanjec, a political analyst and editor in chief of the daily Jutarnji List. Conversely Zarko Puhovski, a professor in political science at the University of Zagreb, thinks that Kolinda Grabar Kitarovic will win the second round. He has said that her party, the HDZ, usually knew how to motivate its electorate better and that moreover the candidate could count on the support of at least half of Milan Kujundzic's voters on 11th January.

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