

Zuzana Caputova becomes the first woman to be president of the Republic of Slovakia

As expected, Zuzana Caputova (Progressive Slovakia, PS) was elected President of Slovakia on 30th March. The accession of a woman to this post is a first in the country's history. The candidate won 58.4% of the vote and therefore won easily against her rival, Vice-President of the Commission, responsible for Energy, Maros Sefcovic, who was supported by the party in office Direction-Social Democracy (SMER-SD), who won 41.6% of the vote. During the first round of the election organised on 16th March last Zuzana Caputova had already taken an comfortable lead over her adversary winning 40.57% of the vote (Maros Sefcovic won 18.66%).

Turnout rose to 41.79% and was well below that registered in the second round of the previous election on 29th March 2014 (- 8.69 points).

Results of the Presidential election on 16th and 30th March 2019 in Slovakia

Turn out: 48.74% (1st round) and 41.79% (2nd round)

Candidates	No of votes won (1st round)	% of votes won (1st round)	No of votes won (2nd round)	No of votes won (2nd round)
Zuzana Caputova (Progressive Slovakia, PS)	870 415	40.57	1 056 582	58.40
Maros Sefcovic	400 379	18.66	752 403	41.60
Stefan Harabin	307 823	14.34		
Marian Kotleba (Kotleba-People's Party-New Slovakia, L'SNS)	222 935	10.39		
Frantisek Miklosko, independent	122 916	5.72		
Bela Bugar (Most-Hid)	66 667	3.10		
Milan Krajniak (We are a family, AME R)	59 464	2.77		
Eduard Chmelar, independent	58 965	2.74		
Martin Dano, independent	11 146	0.51		
Robert Svec, independent	6 567	0.30		
Juraj Zabochnik, independent	6 219	0.30		
Ivan Zuzula (Slovakian Conservative Party, SKS)	3 807	0.17		
Bohumila Tauchmannova, independent	3 535	0.16		
Robert Mistrik, independent	3 318	0.15		
Jozsef Menyhart (Hungarian Coalition Party, SMK-MKP)	1 208	0.05		

Sources : <http://www.volbysr.sk/sk/data01.html> ; <http://www.volbysr.sk/sk/data03.html>

"I am glad that I won but also because it was made possible using means that many thought impossible: by expressing my opinion, by not using populism, by telling the truth, by attracting attention and by winning trust without aggressive rhetoric and without any cheap shots," declared Zuzana Caputova on the announcement of the results, adding, "Let's look for what brings us together, let's put cooperation above personal interests. This election has proven that one can win without attacking one's rivals."

The new President promised to fight to protect the environment, to support the elderly and for more effective, independent justice. "I aim to launch active systemic change which will deprive prosecutors and the police of all political influence," declared Ms Caputova. "Next year we shall elect a new Prosecutor General appointed by the President of the Republic. Extensive investigations on corruption and the fight to counter criminal activity are the most important steps to take," she added.

Between rounds Zuzana Caputova received the support of Jozef Kuciak, the brother of murdered journalist Jan Kuciak, who was assassinated with his wife Martina Kusnirova at the end of February 2018^[1] "I shall certainly vote for Zuzana Caputova. I shall not vote for anyone supported by the oligarchs and by people who took my brother and my sister-in-law away," he wrote.

From the beginning of the campaign Zuzana Caputova also had the support of outgoing President Andrej Kiska, who relinquished his right to stand for a second mandate. "Many countries probably envy us for having chosen a president who symbolises values such as decency. Slovakia is in a moral

crisis and needs a president like Zuzana Caputova," stressed Andrej Kiska after the vote.

A sharp critic of government, Zuzana Caputova took advantage of the electorate's discontent with those in office. « In the eyes of the electorate, she is the answer to the present issues, » declared Grigorij Meseznikov, a political analyst and founder of the Institute for Public Affairs (IVO).

"If Zuzana Caputova is elected it will be a sign that the Slovaks want change, indicated Viera Zuborova, a political expert. "Direction-Social Democracy is exhausted and compromised by its show of arrogance in office, corruption and its relations with the oligarchs. Zuzana Caputova's popularity is an expression of voter discontent," declared Juraj Marusiak, political expert for the Academy of Sciences.

"Zuzana Caputova caught the electorate's heart especially because of her attitude, the honesty with which she addresses people and the fact that she formulates her ideas firmly without seeking conflict. In a divided political landscape in which vulgarity is the norm her style emerges as an alternative, another means of communication. In addition to this she defends her deeply humane positions, stresses former Prime Minister (2010-2012) and sociologist (but also unfortunate candidate in the presidential election on 21st March and 4th April 2009), Iveta Radicova.

Aged 45, Zuzana Caputova comes from Bratislava but spent her first years in the neighbouring town of Pezinok. A graduate in law from the University of Comenius Bratislava she joined Via Iuris, a

*[1] Jan Kuciak was investigating possible tax fraud and corruption in political and economic milieu for the website aktuality.sk, run by the country's leading daily newspaper *Nový čas*. This murder led to the resignation in March 2018 of the then Prime Minister Robert Fico (SMER-SD) and two of his ministers.*

Slovakian rights defence organisation and she worked as a lawyer for the non-profit sector notably taking care of maltreated children. She is a member of the Environmental Law Alliance Worldwide.

Zuzana Caputova notably distinguished herself by successfully preventing the opening of a large public toxic waste landfill site in Pezinok (a town of 22000 inhabitants). The battle lasted no fewer than 14 years (1999-2103). At the time she launched the biggest citizens' movement ever seen in Slovakia since the Velvet Revolution of 1989, which led to the fall of the Communist regime in Czechoslovakia. After her victory the EU Court of Justice established open consultation rules in the event of urban projects that might affect the environment. In 2016, Zuzana Caputova received the prestigious Goldman Prize for the Environment for Europe, deemed to be the Nobel Prize for Ecology.

The new President of the Slovakian Republic will be sworn in on 15th June next.

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