

Katalin Novak, new president of the Republic of Hungary

Corinne Deloy

RESULTS

Katalin Novak (Alliance of Young Democrats-Civic Union, FIDESZ-MPSZ), loyal to Prime Minister Viktor Orban, was elected President of the Republic of Hungary on 10 March by the members of the Országgyűlés, the single chamber of the Hungarian Parliament. She won 137 votes; her rival, the candidate of United for Hungary (UH), an alliance of six opposition parties (the Socialist Party (MSZP), the Democratic Coalition (DK), the Party of Dialogue (PM), Doing Politics Differently-Green Party (LMP), Momentum and the Movement for a Better Hungary (Jobbik)), Peter Rona, an economist, won only 51 votes.

She succeeds Janos Ader, who held the post since 2012.

Katalin Novak said she wanted to halt Hungary's demographic decline, a mission she has been leading since 2014 as Minister for Family. "We women raise children, take care of the sick, cook, can be in two places at once, earn a living, teach, get Nobel prizes," she said before her election. Interviewed by the website Index, she said that she "will not be a puppet", that she "will defend the unity of the nation" and that she "will never support the dismantling of the rule of law".

The choice of a woman as candidate for the presidency of the Republic is symbolic. "This is the reason why Viktor Orban chose a woman, saying: "You see, finally, it is I who will impose a woman at the head of the country, and not you. A message sent to the opposition to say "I am the progressive one", analyses Catherine Horel, a historian specialising in

contemporary Central Europe at the University of Paris Panthéon-Sorbonne.

Appointed by Viktor Orban on 22 December 2021, Katalin Novak immediately resigned from her position as minister. "Representing Hungary, serving the whole nation. I am preparing for this difficult task with all my faith, heart and mind", she said. However, Katalin Novak was not Viktor Orban's first choice, since he wanted to see Laszlo Kover, President of the National Assembly, elected to the post, but the latter declined the offer.

Katalin Novak is 44 years old and comes from Szeged. She graduated in law from the University of Szeged and in economics from the Corvinus University in Budapest. Between 2001 and 2003, she was an attaché at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. For a number of years, she devoted herself to her three children and was with her husband in Germany and the USA. Back in Hungary, she became advisor to the Minister of Foreign Affairs in 2010 and then, in 2012, head of the cabinet of the Minister of Human Resources. She was appointed State Secretary for Family and Youth in 2014, a position she would hold until 2020, when she was appointed Minister for Family. Katalin Novak has been Vice President of FIDESZ-MPSZ since 2017. Since 2019, she has been Chair of the Political Network for Values, an international organisation that defends the traditional family model and religious freedom.

As Minister for Family Affairs, Katalin Novak has provided support for large families and allowed

Presidential elections in Hungary

10th March 2022

child benefits to be paid as early as the embryonic stage. Thanks to her policy, Hungary's birth rate has increased by 27% since 2010. "We want babies rather than migrants" and "Europe is the continent of empty cradles" are just some of her shock phrases. Since 2015, she has organised a demographic summit every two years in Budapest.

Katalin Novak will join the Sandor Palace, the official residence of the presidents of the Republic of Hungary, on 10 May. She is the first woman to be elected head of state in Hungary and also the youngest head of state the country has ever known.

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