

Robert Golob's Movement for Freedom wins Slovenia's parliamentary elections

The Movement for Freedom (GS) led by Robert Golob came out first in the 24 April parliamentary elections in Slovenia. It won 34.54% of the vote and 41 of the 90 seats in the Drzavni Zbor (National Assembly), the lower house of parliament.

It largely overtook the Democratic Party (SDS) of incumbent Prime Minister Janez Jansa, which obtained 23.53% of the vote and 27 elected members (+2 compared to the previous parliamentary elections on 3 June 2018). The size of the victory is a surprise as the two parties were given neck and neck by opinion polls. *"The vote was against Janez Jansa, against Slovenia following the path of Hungary, against illiberal democracy, against the government's takeover of public television, against control of the judiciary,"* said Miha Kovac, a professor at the University of Ljubljana.

New Slovenia (NSi), a party led by Matej Tonin, took third place with 6.85% of the vote and 8 MPs (+1). Two parties of the Constitutional Arc Coalition (KUL) follow it: The Social Democrats (SD), led by Tanja Fajon, won 6.65% of the vote and 7 seats (- 3) and The Left (L), led by Luka Mesec, barely managed to cross the threshold of 4% of the vote required to be represented in Parliament with 4.38% and 5 elected (- 4).

The Slovenians were strongly motivated to vote. Nearly seven out of ten voters turned out at the polls: the turnout was 69.54%, which is +16.91 points compared to the previous poll on 3 June 2018 (52.63%) and the highest rate since the poll on 15 October 2000.

Results of the parliamentary elections of 24 April 2022 in Slovenia

Turnout: 69.54%

Parties	No of votes won	% of votes cast	No of seats
Movement for Freedom (GS)	403 663	34,54	41
Democratic Party (SDS)	274 934	23,53	27
New Slovenia (NSi)	80 089	6,85	8
Social Democrats (SD)	77 741	6,65	7
The Left (L)	51 202	4,38	5
Others	280 913	24,05	0
Minorities			2

Source : <https://volitve.dvk-rs.si/#/rezultati>

"Now we can say that our goal has been achieved: this victory means that we will be able to bring freedom to our country. We have a clear mandate to return to normality

and to restore freedom," said Robert Golob, who is confined to his home after contracting the coronavirus. *"You will never hear of illiberal democracy again. There*

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is only one kind of democracy, and we will restore it," said Marta Kos, the diplomat, who is expected to become foreign minister in a Golob-led government.

Uros Esih, a political analyst with the daily Delo, described the legislative elections as *"a battle between liberal and illiberal forces"*. *"Previously seen as a model in Eastern Europe, Slovenia has become one of the biggest troublemakers, with freedoms being curtailed,"* said Valdo Mihelj, a professor at the University of Ljubljana.

Robert Golob had made the election a *"referendum on democracy"*. During his election campaign he promised to build a *"free and open society"*. His programme, ecologist and pro-European, is on the centre-left.

Janez Jansa failed to stay in power. The outgoing Prime Minister faced numerous protests during his two years in power. Slovenians often took to the streets to express their discontent and opposition MPs tabled numerous motions of no confidence against his government. Janez Jansa was also called to order by the European Union, notably for his policy towards the media, the head of government being accused of not respecting media plurality.

Janez Jansa had long believed that rural and older Slovenians, who constitute the core of his electorate, would help him win the elections on 24 April. But this was without counting on the strong mobilisation of the whole population, especially the younger voters.

On 15 March, the outgoing Prime Minister went to Kyiv in the company of the Polish and Czech heads of government, Mateusz Morawiecki (Law and Justice, PiS) and Petr Fiala (Civic Democratic Party, ODS), to support Ukraine and, above all, to position himself as a defender of freedom. His efforts were not enough to improve his image in the eyes of a majority of Slovenes and his defeat is particularly severe.

Aged 55, Robert Golob is an engineer by profession. He holds a PhD in electrical engineering from the University of Ljubljana.

Originally from Nova Gorica, a town on the border with Italy, the man is strongly influenced by the region's anti-fascist tradition and has long been involved in cross-border cooperation with Italy. He was Secretary of State in the Ministry of Economic Affairs in charge of Energy from May 1999 to June 2000. In 2002, he founded his own company in the energy sector. He then took over the management of the national electricity distribution company GHen-I.

Robert Golob was a member of Positive Slovenia (PS), a party founded by the mayor of Ljubljana, Zoran Jankovic, of which he was vice-president. He then joined the Alenka Bratusek Alliance (ZaAB), a centrist party created from a split in Positive Slovenia and led by former Prime Minister (2013-2014) Alenka Bratusek, in which he held the same position.

In November 2021, Robert Golob was ousted from the leadership of the company, which was nationalised after several restructuring operations. At the beginning of 2022, the fifty-year-old took over the leadership of Dej, an ecologist party created in May 2021 by former environment minister Jure Leben, which he renamed the Freedom Movement (Gibanje Svoboda), in a bid to win office. He has succeeded in becoming the new Prime Minister of Slovenia.

Robert Golob is expected to approach the Social Democrats to form his government. He may also expand his coalition to the Left. He has promised to try to break the record for the fastest formation of a government, currently set at 34 days after the election.

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