

CENTRE-LEFT CANDIDATE WINS SLOVENIA'S PRESIDENTIAL ELECTIONS

Nataša Pirc Musar to become country's first female president

15 November 2022

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Slovenian voters have elected the centre-left lawyer Nataša Pirc Musar as the country's next president. Having garnered 54% of the popular vote, Pirc Musar defeated former Slovenian Foreign Minister Anže Logar, an independent supported by the leading opposition SDS party, in the second round of the country's presidential elections.

Held on 23 October and 13 November, the presidential elections mark an historic first as Pirc Musar is on course to become the first female president of Slovenia in late December, succeeding Borut Pahor, the country's outgoing head of state, for a five-year term.

Pirc Musar's electoral victory, although widely expected, is an indirect boost for Slovenian Prime Minister Robert Golob and his centre-left coalition government. Sworn into office five months ago, the Golob Government, which also supported Pirc Musar's candidacy in the second round, appears politically stable, with the presidential elections likely to have a limited impact on government stability.

Below, we provide further insight into the Slovenian presidential elections and the country's post-election landscape.

This memo will cover:

-  the election results and their impact on Slovenian politics,
-  an introduction to the country's incoming president,
-  implications for political stability.

A CENTRE-LEFT RUN-OFF VICTORY

On 23 October, Slovenian voters went to the polls to elect the country's head of state for a five-year term from a wide pool of ideologically diverse presidential candidates. With close to 34% of the popular vote, Anže Logar, Foreign Minister under the third Government of former Prime Minister Janez Janša (2020-2022), came first, securing the largest share of the popular vote. However Logar, who was formally an independent candidate but with the support of the leading opposition right-wing SDS party, fell short of securing more than 50% of the vote, leading to a run-off vote between him and his top contender, independent lawyer Nataša Pirc Musar, on 13 November.

As Logar came first in the first round of the vote, the remaining and mostly centre-left-leaning candidates in the presidential election campaign closed ranks to endorse Pirc Musar, making her the favourite to win the run-off vote. In line with pre-election polling, Pirc Musar, who was also supported by Slovenia's centre-left ruling coalition in the second round, defeated the SDS-supported Logar by securing close to 54%.

ELECTION RESULTS

Run-Off Vote – 13 November, 2022		
Candidate	Affiliation	Popular Vote (%)
Nataša Pirc Musar	independent, endorsed by Slovenia's centre-left & ruling parties after first round	53.9
Anže Logar	candidate of the leading opposition SDS, endorsed by the opposition N.Si	46.1
First Round – 23 October 2022		
Candidate	Affiliation	Popular Vote (%)
Anže Logar	candidate of the leading opposition SDS	34
Nataša Pirc Musar	centre-left independent	26.9
Milan Brglez	independent, supported by the ruling centre-left GS and SD parties	15.5
Vladimir Prebilič	independent, supported by the green Vesna party	10.6
Sabina Senčar	candidate of the nationalist Resni.ca party	6
Janez Cigler Kralj	candidate of the Christian democratic N.Si	4.4
Miha Kordiš	candidate of the left-wing Levica	2.8

(Source: State Election Commission of Slovenia, Turnout: 53%)

SLOVENIA'S FIRST FEMALE PRESIDENT

Having won the elections, Pirc Musar is expected to succeed outgoing Slovenian President Borut Pahor on 23 December. She will enter office with a variety of experience from the public life. An attorney by profession, Pirc Musar started her career as a journalist, working for several domestic and international media outlets.

Best remembered for her work as Government Information Commissioner (2004-2014) and legal representation for Melania Trump, the wife of former US President Donald Trump, she is a former President of the Red Cross of Slovenia (2015-2016), regarded as one of the most influential lawyers in Slovenia, with an extensive focus on media law and human rights.

As President, Pirc Musar has pledged to focus on reforming the country's healthcare and pension systems, as well as on strengthening Slovenia's security and tackling climate change. She is also expected to prioritise a visit to the countries of the Western Balkans in her new capacity.

IMPACT ON GOVERNMENT STABILITY

The president of Slovenia, both by tradition and under constitutional rules, maintains a ceremonial role in the country's public and political life. At the same time, the president has exclusive powers to nominate several key positions for confirmation in the National Assembly, including Constitutional Court justices, central bank governor, President of the Court of Audit, and the Human Rights Ombudsman. Resulting from the parliamentary elections held in April¹, the Slovenian parliament is controlled by a centre-left majority supporting the coalition government of Prime Minister Robert Golob², that stands in line with Pirc Musar's ideological background.

With Pirc Musar's victory in the presidential elections, we expect the continuation of a smooth legislative process in the country's legislature. While Slovenia, similar to all other countries of the Southeast European region, continues to be affected by the economic consequences of Russia's war against Ukraine, including the looming economic downturn and the ongoing energy crisis, support for the Golob Government remains stable, with [latest polls showing](#) that PM's major ruling Freedom Movement party (GS) maintaining a commanding lead over its main electoral rival, the right-wing SDS.

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¹ See [here](#) for Aretera's overview of the Slovenian parliamentary elections from April 2022

² See [here](#) for Aretera's overview of the formation of the Golob Government from June 2022