SOLOVAKIA
INITIAL PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION OVERVIEW

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SLOVAKIA: Presidential Elections 2019

Top 5 presidential candidates (out of 13)

- The first round of Slovakia’s presidential elections, which was held on 16 March 2019, was won by a political newcomer, lawyer and environmental activist Zuzana Čaputová who will face a top Slovak diplomat and current Vice-President of the European Commission Maroš Šefčovič in the second round on 30 March 2019.
- The 45-year-old Čaputová, a vice-chairwoman of the non-parliamentary liberal Progressive Slovakia party, managed to get support of almost all democratic opposition parties as well as the endorsement of the outgoing president Andrej Kiska and won 40.6% of the vote, far ahead of Šefčovič (52), a candidate of the strongest ruling party SMER-SD, who had 18.7%. The turnout in the first round was 48.74% (highest since 1999).
- Despite absolutely no experience of public office with her landslide victory Čaputová confirmed the polls ahead of the first round, which had signaled further decline in support for SMER-SD a year after the murder of an investigative journalist Ján Kuciak and his fiancée
- The killing of Kuciak, who reported on fraud cases involving politically connected businessmen, triggered the biggest anti-government protests in Slovakia since communism and also led to the resignation of then-prime minister and SMER-SD leader Robert Fico. Although his government has managed to remain in power, SMER-SD’s popularity has slumped massively.
- On the first anniversary of Kuciak’s murder, thousands of Slovaks rallied again to protest against what they see as a lack of government action on the corruption he uncovered. The biggest breakthrough in the ongoing investigation to date came just two days before the vote, when special prosecutors said they had charged notorious businessman Marián Kočner with political ties, a subject of Kuciak’s reporting, with ordering the murder.
- A tough second-round run-off is expected as Maroš Šefčovič backed by SMER-SD will primarily try to mobilize voters of two other unsuccessful presidential candidates - anti-establishment candidate Štefan Harabin (independent) and far-right candidate Marián Kotleba (KOTLEBA-LSNS).
- Should Čaputová manage to win the second round too, she will not only become Slovakia’s first female president, but she will also represent a rare victory for pro-European and liberal forces in the central Europe.

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