



# Weekly Briefing

**Slovakia political briefing:**  
**2019 European Parliament Election in Slovakia**  
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## **2019 European Parliament Election in Slovakia**

*The 2019 European Parliament election results represent another chapter in the transformation of the Slovak political landscape following the murders of investigative journalist Ján Kuciak and his fiancée, Martina Kušnírová, in February 2018. Earlier this year, political novice Zuzana Čaputová, a former vice chairman of Progressive Slovakia, was elected the country's first female president. Progressive Slovakia-SPOLU, a new pro-EU coalition, scored a stunning victory in Slovakia, coming first. The ruling SMER-SD party of former Prime Minister Robert Fico came in second followed by the far-right L'SNS. According to the Slovakian Statistical Office 22.74 percent of Slovakia's eligible voters cast their ballots — a substantial improvement over 2014, when only 13.02 percent voted in the European election, the lowest turnout in all of Europe.*

### **What do Members of European Parliament (MEPs) do?**

MEPs are elected to represent regions in some countries, like Italy, while in others, such as Germany, they have the whole country as their constituency. They will serve a five-year term (2019-2024) and spend their time between European parliaments in Strasbourg and Brussels.

The number each country gets is proportional to its population. Germany, the most populous, will get 96 MEPs for its 82.8 million people, while tiny Malta, with 475,000 people, has just six. Slovakia has 13 seats, what will be increased to 14 after Brexit.

They pass EU laws and approve its budget, along with the European Council, which comprises of the heads of state of each country. MEPs represent individual countries or regions but in parliament sit in transnational groups according to political ideology.

MEPs also help choose the president of the European Commission, the EU's civil service. The largest political grouping after May's election has the strongest mandate to have its choice head up the commission. Last time around that was the European People's Party, who managed to get its candidate, Jean-Claude Juncker, into the hot seat.

To appoint the commission president, another body, the European Council, comprising chiefs of EU countries, first votes on a nominee chosen after taking into account the election result. If they approve the candidate, it goes to the European Parliament, where he or she must

get the support of a majority of MEPs. Only then does he or she become president of the European Commission.

### **Situation before the EP election in Slovakia (campaigning and predictions):**

On Saturday (May 25, 2019) more than 4.4 million Slovaks were able to cast their vote in the European Parliamentary Election. It was extremely hard to predict or accurately predict any substantive outcome. However, some trends before the election indicated a couple of trends. Some politicians and journalists suggested that there was a real chance that the Neo-Nazi, far-right extremist LSNS (Non-Inscrits in the EU Parliament) might win a plurality of votes.

Slovakia joined the European Union in 2004; and ever since, its turnout in the European Election had been always the lowest in the whole EU – 17% in 2004, 19.6% in 2009 and only 13% in 2014 (an all-time-low in the EU's history). The turnout was expected to reach a higher number this time; however, it was still unlikely to exceed more than 21% according to the preceding polls. With such a low turnout, it was extremely challenging to predict the result, though it was not entirely impossible. 31 parties/lists were standing in the election; though, no more than 8 or 10 were given a chance to get at least one seat.

According to the polls three parties had an equal chance of gaining a plurality of votes – far-right, extremist LSNS (NI), pro-European coalition PS/S (ALDE/EPP Groups in the EU Parliament) and center-left Smer-(S&D Group in the European Parliament). They were followed by center-right liberal SaS (national-conservative ECR Group in the EU Parliament), conservative OĽaNO (ECR), right-wing Sme Rodina (right-wing ENF Group in the EU Parliament) and national conservative SNS (ECR/EFDD). Centre-right KDĽ (EPP) was expecting the worst result in a European election in its history, meanwhile center-right, ethnic minority Most-Híd (EPP) and SMK (EPP) were in danger of not receiving any MEPs in the 2019 EP election.

Slovakia will have 14 MEPs in the new EP, all chosen from parties which gain more than five percent of the vote in the elections. The number of MEPs from each party depended on how large that party's share of the vote was. Each party in Slovakia could field up to a maximum of 14 candidates and under a preferential voting system, voters could indicate which candidate they would like to see elected.

Most of the main political parties were fielding the maximum number of candidates. However, not all appeared to be putting the same effort into their campaigns. While candidates for some parties could be seen on election billboards, campaigns went on TV or radio with few appearing on political discussion shows to put forward their election programs. Online, party activity appeared equally sparse.

This was all in stark contrast with campaigns for parliamentary or presidential elections which always start in earnest months in advance. Political analysts said this was down to the European elections coming so soon after Slovak Presidential elections, which had been held in March, as well as some parties were seeing EP elections as a lesser priority than other polls. Another fact is that the Slovak citizens assign the lowest importance to these elections in comparison with all other elections.

The European Parliament was running an EU-wide campaign to encourage voters to cast their votes. Its “This time I’m voting” campaign was both online and involves a roadshow, organized by the Slovak Office of European Parliament and Representation of European Commission in Slovakia, which visited 17 towns and cities in May, explaining to people why it was important they vote in the elections and how their vote could influence the lives of people in Slovakia and across the EU.

To sum it up, the EP election in Slovakia was predicted as combative campaigning with a clash between pro- and anti-EU political movements with an expectation that the new Slovak delegation in the EP would be probably significantly fragmented. While the election was important for new parties to consolidate their presence on the Slovak political scene, the ĽSNS, for example, were trying to build as much as possible on the relatively strong showing of its leader in the recent presidential elections.

### **Official results of 2019 EP election in Slovakia:**

The coalition of Progressive Slovakia and Spolu (who supported Zuzana Čaputová in the presidential election in March) won the election ahead of the ruling Smer-SD. The far right ĽSNS ended third. The election turnout was 22.74 percent, much higher than in 2014, when Slovakia posted a turnout of 13 percent. It was a substantial improvement over 2014.

Despite the fact that the turnout in Slovakia has almost doubled since 2014, it was still the lowest within the EU, with the European average at almost 51 percent. It is nothing the Slovaks could be proud of, but it does show a positive trend. Slovakia has reversed the

decreasing turnout that had been dropping in the last three European elections. It partly means that Slovak citizens are interested in issues that concern the international community and are not focused only on themselves. The higher turnout is also ascribed to the get-out-the-vote campaign by the European Parliament and European Commission.

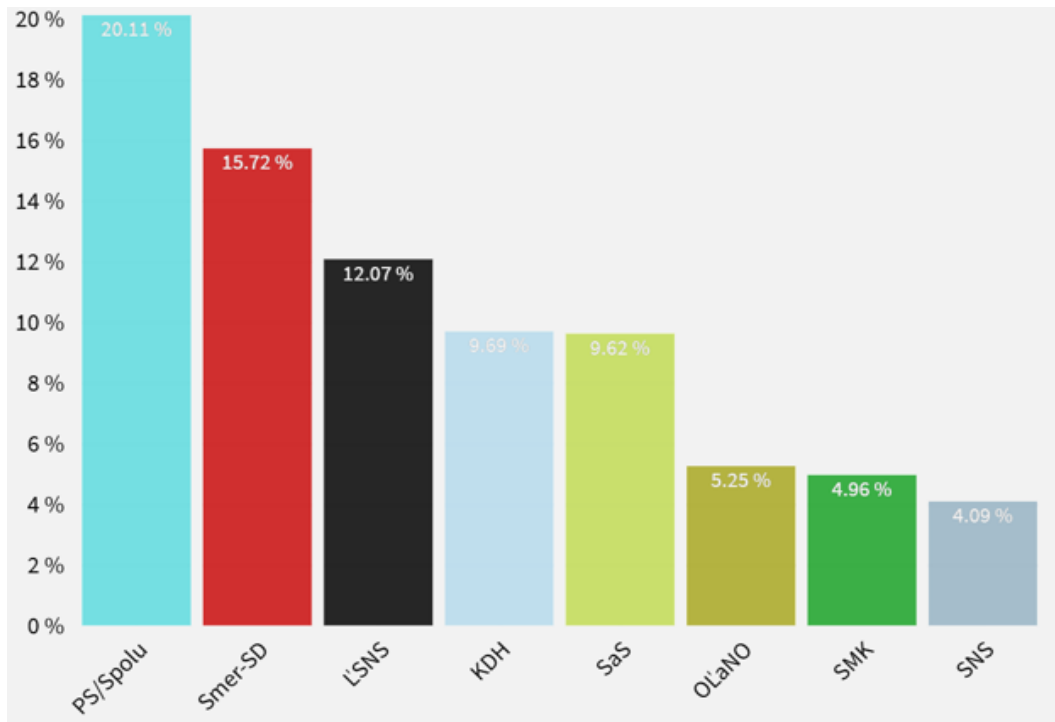
The results of the European Parliament election in Slovakia have clearly shown and confirmed the victory of pro-EU forces. Slovaks have chosen mostly pro-European politicians to represent them in the European Parliament in the next five years. In the EU election, voters have turned away from parties of the ruling coalition. The EP election meant a total blow-out of the two coalition partners of Smer-SD (Most-Híd and SNS). They did not get any mandates in the European Parliament.

Out of the 14 mandates that Slovakia gets in the EP (13 + 1 after Brexit), only three will be taken by candidates of a coalition party (Smer-SD), while six go to non-parliamentary opposition, two mandates to far-right extremists, and three to parliamentary opposition parties.

A coalition of two new parties, Progressive Slovakia and Spolu, confirmed their victory wave during the elections to European Parliament. After electing Matúš Vallo as Bratislava mayor and Zuzana Čaputová as the president of Slovakia, they won the EP elections with 20.11 percent of votes, which will translate into four mandates. However, the far-right People's Party-Our Slovakia (ĽSNS) also had a strong result. With the support of 12 percent of votes, it obtained two seats in the EP.

As many expected prior to the elections, those two forces, strongly pro-EU (PS and Spolu) and strongly anti-EU (ĽSNS), were most successful in mobilizing their electorates. This mobilization helped to increase the turnout to slightly over 22 percent.

The election in Slovakia, however, also highlighted other parties. The Christian Democratic Movement (KDH) and Freedom and Solidarity (SaS) also managed to mobilize their voters, both gaining two seats in the European Parliament.



Source: Statistics Office

### **Progressive Slovakia/Spolu (Together) 20.11%**

Elected MEPs: Michal Šimečka (PS), Vladimír Bilčík (Spolu), Martin Hojsík (PS), Michal Wiezik (PS)

Faction: PS for ALDE, Spolu for EPP

### **Smer-SD 15.72%**

Elected MEPs: Monika Beňová, Miroslav Číž, Robert Hajšel

Faction: S&D

### **People's Party - Our Slovakia (LSNS) 12.07%**

Elected MEPs: Milan Uhrík, Miroslav Radačovský

Faction: N/A (far-right party)

**Christian Democratic Movement (KDH) 9.69%**

Elected MEPs: Ivan Štefanec, Miriam Lexmann (will take up her chair after Brexit)

Faction:

**Freedom and Solidarity (SaS) 9.60%**

Elected MEPs: Lucia Nicholsonová, Eugen Jurzyca

Faction: N/A

**Ordinary People and Independent Personalities (OLaNO) 5.25%**

Elected MEP: Peter Pollák

Faction: ECR.