

Centre-right opposition 'wins' Slovak election

Slovakia - A coalition of four centre-right opposition parties has won enough seats to unseat Slovak Prime Minister Robert Fico's coalition government. With most of the votes now counted opposition supporters across the country were partying the night away knowing the results will bring about a change of government in the small Central European country. Mr Fico's leftist Smer-SD party beat each of the opposition parties in the country's parliamentary elections - capturing 34.79% of the vote, enough to gain 62 seats in the 150-seat parliament. But the four centre-right opposition parties picked up 79 seats. Smer-SD actually increased its share of the vote. It will have the largest number of seats in parliament by far, but will fall short of an overall majority. Mr Fico has said he was willing to try to form a government or to lead the opposition *TASR* reported. Slovak President Ivan Gašparovic has said he will ask the winner of the general election Smer-SD to form the next government. He said it is the moral thing to do. Opposition parties have however united against forming any form of coalition with Fico. SDKU-DS opposition leader Iveta Radicova: "I am ready to be the first female Slovak Prime Minister."

The main opposition party the SDKU-DS came second in the election with 15.42% followed by the extra-parliamentary Freedom and Solidarity party (SaS) with 12.14%; the Christian Democratic Movement (KDH) got 8.52% and the Slovak-Hungarian Most-Hid 8.12%. The last among the political parties that managed to get into parliament was the SNS (a part of the current coalition) - 5.07%. Two parties who failed to get the magic 5% needed to get back into the Slovak parliament were the LS-HZDS (a part of the current coalition) who received only 4.32% and the ethnic-Hungarian SMK (a part of the opposition) who got only 4.33%. In the new parliament Smer-SD gained 62 seats. Its coalition partner the SNS gained 9 seats. The two parties have just 71 seats at their disposal, not enough to form a government. The opposition parties intend on forming a new coalition government, as they have together 79 seats in Slovakia's legislative body. The SDKU-DS having 28 MPs, SaS – 22, KDH – 15 and Most-Hid – 14. Turnout in the general election was 58.83%, up from 54.67% in 2006.

Category: Central Europe / Slovakia / General Election 2010

Level: Intermediate / Upper intermediate

In the early hours of Sunday morning Radicova added: "It's the end of Meciarism." (referring to the LS-HZDS chairman and former Prime Minister Vladimir Meciar). There was early speculation that another former Prime Minister, Mikulas Dzurinda, could possibly return and be given a role in the new government. Following the exit polls that showed the Slovak National Party losing power its leader Jan Slota said, "Homosexuals and Hungarians will begin to rule in this state, so thank you very much!"

As the night wore on Smer-SD chairman Robert Fico said, "What's better for Slovakia – a stable government made up of two parties or a mishmash (of more smaller parties)?" He added, "If a party with 35% goes into opposition, anyone forming the government needs to count on having a really strong and tough opposition." He has no qualms about going into opposition. The morning after the night before saw the resignations of all top SMK leaders. Meanwhile the LS-HZDS party said it respected the result. Stanislav Haber from LS-HZDS told *TASR*: "We're sorry to say that Slovakia has chosen a path of reducing its social securities, the path of instability, drugs legalisation and acceptance of homosexual marriages."

Role forward to Sunday lunchtime – the four right-wing opposition parties appeared likely to not break ranks and join a Smer-SD government. Appearing together on Slovak independent TV channel Markiza's "Election Studio" (a talk show) the four right-wing opposition party leaders appeared united saying they don't want to negotiate with Smer-SD. (*Smer* in English means 'direction', SD = Social Democrats). SDKU-DS leader Iveta Radicova: "Right-wing parties have gained more than in 2006." She added, "We've appeared in front of people as an alternative, so taking part in talks with Fico would be cheating on our voters." Chairman of the SaS Richard Sulik shares her view: "Negotiating with Smer-SD makes no sense for my party either." Jan Figel (KDH): "The election winner is the one able to secure a majority in the parliament." Bela Bugar leader of Most-HID: "We promised our voters that we won't form a government with Smer-SD, and we have no intention of disappointing them." Meanwhile Slovak National Party Vice Chairman Rudolf Pucik has pointed to the great ideological differences advocated by individual right-wing parties, from the KDH to the liberal SaS. The right-wing leaders conceded that forming a Government won't be easy and compromises will have to be made. Whilst all the opposition parties respect the usual procedures of forming a government they are however holding unofficial talks. First though, a good nights sleep!

EXERCISES

1. **General elections:** Think of three things you know about general elections. Go round the room swapping details.

2. **Geography: Slovakia:** Where is Slovakia? What is its capital? What countries surround it? Draw a map on the board or **look on Google maps**.

3. **Slovak General election 2010:** Think of three things you know about the Slovak General Election 2010. Go round the room swapping details.

4. **Dictation:** The teacher will read four to six lines of the article slowly and clearly. Students will write down what they hear. The teacher will repeat the passage slowly again. Self correct your work from page one - filling in spaces and correcting mistakes. Be honest with yourself on the number of errors. Advise the teacher of your total number of errors. Less than five is very good. Ten is acceptable. Any more is room for improvement! More than twenty - we need to do some work!

5. **Reading:** The students should now read the article aloud, swapping readers every paragraph.

6. **Vocabulary:** Students should now look through the article and underline any vocabulary they do not know. Look in dictionaries. Discuss and help each other out. The teacher will go through and explain any unknown words or phrases.

7. **The article:** Students should look through the article with the teacher.

- a) What is the article about?
- b) What do you think about the article?
- c) **What is the latest on this story?**

8. **Let's debate: Slovak main political parties:** With your partner or in small groups discuss each of the main political parties listed below. What conclusions do you come to? Why?

Smer-SD	SDKU-DS
Slovak National Party	SaS
LS-HZDS	KDH
SMK	Most-Hid

The teacher will choose some pairs to discuss their findings in front of the class.

9. **Let's think!** Swap partners. With your new partner on the board write as many words to do with '**political parties**' as you can. *One-two minutes*. Compare with other teams. Using your words compile a short dialogue together.

10. **Let's Think: I am going to Slovakia...** You are going to Slovakia with some friends on holiday. Describe to the class what you might see.

Centre-right opposition 'wins' Slovak election – 15th June 2010

11. **Let's talk! In a pub:** *In pairs:* Imagine you are in a pub. The conversation gets onto **the Slovak General Election 2010**. Discuss. *5-minutes*.

12. **Let's do 'The Article Quiz':** Have the students quiz each other in pairs. They score a point for each correct answer and half a point each time they have to look at the article for help. See who can get the highest score!

Student A

- 1) Name the Prime Minister.
- 2) Name the four centre-right opposition parties.
- 3) How many seats did the Slovak National Party get?
- 4) What percentage of seats did the KDH get?
- 5) Who is the leader of the SDKU-DS?

Student B

- 1) What was the general election turnout figure?
- 2) How many seats do the four centre opposition parties now have?
- 3) How many seats does Smer have?
- 4) How many seats does any government need to govern with a majority?
- 5) Who is the Slovak President?

13. **Presentation:** In pairs, groups or individually: Prepare in class or at home a 2-minute presentation on: **The Slovak General Election 2010**. Stand at the front of the class to give your presentation. The class can vote on the best presentation. Class – After the presentations go through the strong and weak points on each presentation.

14. **A day in parliament:** In pairs/groups. Look at the list below. Each person chooses to be one of the following. Think of three things that person might do or see during a typical day in parliament. (Imagine!) Create a short story about it. Tell it to your partner/the group. Try to make it interesting, funny, the experiences, the challenges etc... Students try to interlink student storylines!

1 Prime Minister	3 Speaker of Parliament
2 High level secretary	4 A fly on the wall!

The teacher will choose some pairs to tell their stories in front of the class.

15. **Let's write! An e-mail:** Write and send a 200 word e-mail to your teacher about: **The Slovak General Election 2010**. Your e-mail can be read out in class.

16. **Sentence starters:** Finish these sentence starters. Correct your mistakes. Compare what other people have written.

- a) The Prime Minister _____
- b) The winner _____
- c) The opposition _____

DISCUSSION – ideally for Slovak students mainly!!

Student A questions

- 1) Will there be less corruption in Slovakia now?
- 2) What three bits of advice would you give the new government?
- 3) What three bits of advice would you give the opposition parties?
- 4) Did you watch the election results come in? Where were you?
- 5) Who did you want to win the election? Why?
- 6) Did the previous government live up to your expectations? Why? Why not?
- 7) Were there any 'outrageous remarks' or gaffs made by any politicians during the election? If yes, what were they?
- 8) Will the new government allegedly expose any possible mismanagement of the country's debt or not?
- 9) How will world leaders view the election results in Slovakia?
- 10) How will the election results affect relations between Slovakia and Hungary?

Student B questions

- 1) What three bits of advice would you give the new Slovak Prime Minister?
- 2) What issues should the new government be addressing in its early days?
- 3) What do you think about Slovakia possibly having a female Prime Minister?
- 4) Are you satisfied with the Slovak general election result? Why? Why not?
- 5) What changes do you see happening now in Slovakia?
- 6) What challenges lay ahead for the new government?
- 7) What do you think of the opposition?
- 8) Are your friends happy with the outcome of the vote? Why? Why not?
- 9) Did you vote? If no, why not? If yes, why?
- 10) Is this election result 'a breath of fresh air for the country'? Why? Why not?

SPEAKING

The new Slovak Prime Minister

Allow 10-15 minutes - Small groups / pairs / 1 to 1

The new Slovak Prime Minister is about to give a short speech to waiting members of the press. Following this the Prime Minister will take questions from them.

One of you is the new Slovak Prime Minister. The others are members of the press. The Prime Minister will stand at the front of the class.

The members of the press will each prepare three questions to ask the new Slovak Prime Minister. When you speak, announce who you are and which organisation you represent.

The teacher can moderate the session.

GAP FILL: READING

Put the words into the gaps in the text.

Slovakia - A (1)_____ of four centre-right opposition (2)_____ has won enough seats to unseat Slovak Prime Minister Robert Fico's coalition government. With most of the votes now counted opposition supporters across the country were partying the night away knowing the results will bring about a change of government in the small Central European country. Mr Fico's leftist Smer-SD party beat each of the opposition parties in the countries parliamentary (3) _____ - capturing 34.79% of the vote, enough to gain 62 seats in the 150-seat parliament. But the four centre-right (4)_____ parties picked up 79 seats. Smer-SD actually increased its share of the (5)_____. It will have the largest number of seats in parliament by far, but will fall short of an overall majority. Mr Fico has said he was willing to try to form a (6)_____ or to lead the opposition *TASR* reported. Slovak President Ivan Gašparovic has said he will ask the (7)_____ of the general election Smer-SD to form the next government. He said it is the (8)_____ thing to do. Opposition parties have however united against forming any form of coalition with Fico. SDKU-DS opposition leader Iveta Radicova: "I am ready to be the first female Slovak Prime Minister."

moral

coalition

vote

government

elections

parties

winner

opposition

The main opposition party the SDKU-DS came second in the (1)_____ with 15.42% followed by the extra-parliamentary Freedom and Solidarity party (SaS) with 12.14%; the Christian Democratic Movement (KDH) got 8.52% and the Slovak-Hungarian Most-Hid 8.12%. The last among the (2)_____ parties that managed to get into (3)_____ was the SNS (a part of the current coalition) - 5.07%. Two parties who failed to get the (4)_____ 5% needed to get back into the Slovak parliament were the LS-HZDS (a part of the current coalition) who received only 4.32% and the (5)_____ -Hungarian SMK (a part of the opposition) who got only 4.33%. In the new parliament Smer-SD gained 62 seats. Its coalition (6)_____ the SNS gained 9 seats. The two parties have just 71 seats at their disposal, not enough to form a government. The opposition parties (7)_____ on forming a new coalition government, as they have together 79 seats in Slovakia's (8)_____ body. The SDKU-DS having 28 MPs, SaS – 22, KDH – 15 and Most-Hid – 14. Turnout in the general election was 58.83%, up from 54.67% in 2006.

political

partner

intend

election

parliament

legislative

ethnic

magic

GRAMMAR

Put the words into the gaps in the text.

Slovakia - A coalition of four centre-right opposition parties has won (1)___ seats to unseat Slovak Prime Minister Robert Fico's coalition government. (2)___ most of the votes now counted opposition supporters across the country were partying (3)___ night away knowing the results will bring about a change of government in the small Central European country. Mr Fico's leftist Smer-SD party beat each of the opposition parties in the country's parliamentary elections – capturing 34.79% of the vote, enough to gain 62 seats in the 150-seat parliament. (4)___ the four centre-right opposition parties picked up 79 seats. Smer-SD actually increased (5)___ share of the vote. It will have the largest number of seats in parliament by far, but will fall short of an overall majority. Mr Fico has said he was willing to try to form a government or to lead the opposition *TASR* reported. Slovak President Ivan Gašparovic has said he will ask the winner of the general election Smer-SD to form the next government. (6)___ said it is the moral thing to do. Opposition parties have (7)___ united against forming any form of coalition with Fico. SDKU-DS opposition leader Iveta Radicova: "(8)___ am ready to be the first female Slovak Prime Minister."

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SPELLING TEST

The teacher will ask the class individually to spell the following words that are in the article. Afterwards, check your answers with your teacher, using the following ratings: **Pass = 12, Good = 15, Very good = 18, Excellent = 20**

1	parliament	11	majority
2	soundly	12	coalition
3	winner	13	advocated
4	government	14	instability
5	negotiating	15	legalisation
6	supporters	16	disappointing
7	actually	17	procedures
8	speculation	18	opposition
9	ideological	19	whilst
10	compromises	20	mishmash

LINKS

<http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/world/europe/10301751.stm>

<http://edition.cnn.com/2010/WORLD/europe/06/13/slovakia.elections/index.html>

<http://195.46.72.16/free/jsp/search/vz.jsp?type=EN> ; <http://spectator.sme.sk/>

ANSWERS

GAP FILL: Centre-right opposition 'wins' Slovak election: **Slovakia** - A **coalition** of four centre-right opposition **parties** has won enough seats to unseat Slovak Prime Minister Robert Fico's coalition government. With most of the votes now counted opposition supporters across the country were partying the night away knowing the results will bring about a change of government in the small Central European country. Mr Fico's leftist Smer-SD party beat each of the opposition parties in the countries parliamentary **elections** – capturing 34.79% of the vote, enough to gain 62 seats in the 150-seat parliament. But the four centre-right **opposition** parties picked up 79 seats. Smer-SD actually increased its share of the **vote**. It will have the largest number of seats in parliament by far, but will fall short of an overall majority. Mr Fico has said he was willing to try to form a **government** or to lead the opposition *TASR* reported. Slovak President Ivan Gašparovic has said he will ask the **winner** of the general election Smer-SD to form the next government. He said it is the **moral** thing to do. Opposition parties have however united against forming any form of coalition with Fico. SDKU-DS opposition leader Iveta Radicova: "I am ready to be the first female Slovak Prime Minister."

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