



By: *Tomorrow's Affairs Staff*

# Liberal lawyer to become Slovenia's first female president

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Human rights lawyer, and former TV journalist Natasa Pirc Musar won the second round of Slovenia's presidential election on Sunday and will become the country's first female head of state. Pirc Musar was in the lead on 53.8% of the vote, ahead of the conservative veteran Anže Logar on 46.1%. While both candidates had run as independents, they were backed by the centre-left and rightwing political blocs of the small central European country of 2 million, which has been a member of the EU for 15 years.

Logar, a foreign minister in the last government of the rightwing populist former prime minister Janez Janša, had won the first round in October without gaining the required majority. But polls over the past few weeks had indicated popular support rallying around Pirc Musar. There were suggestions that Logar was suffering after failing to distance himself from his former boss, a divisive "My first task will be to open a dialogue among all Slovenians," the new president said.

## Who is Natasa Pirc Musar?

Pirc Musar, 54, is a former TV presenter who became an influential lawyer. She campaigned on human rights, the rule of law and social welfare issues. She also headed the country's data protection authority for a decade, Pirc Musar had represented former US first lady Melania Trump in copyright and other cases in her native Slovenia. The human rights advocate has vowed to be "the voice of women" in Slovenia and abroad and a "moral authority" in her new role.

A former journalist and presenter on Slovenia's main news programme, Ljubljana-born Pirc Musar gained additional training at CNN and Salford University's media department before completing a PhD in law at Vienna University. She was elected as Slovenia's commissioner for access to public information in 2004. While the presidency is largely ceremonial, the head of state still is seen as a person of authority. Presidents nominate prime ministers and members of the constitutional court, who are then elected in parliament, and appoint

members of the anti-corruption commission. During the campaign, Pirc Musar, who is a keen motorcyclist, came under attack because of her husband's lucrative investments, especially in tax havens.

## Setback for right-wing

The results mark a fresh setback for the country's conservatives. Logar, 46, ran as an independent but is a long-time member of the Slovenian Democratic Party (SDS) of Janez Janša, who failed in his bid to be re-elected as premier in April. Critics accused Janša of attacking media freedom and the judiciary and undermining the rule of law in his latest term in office.

Logar told AFP news agency ahead of Sunday's vote it would be "good" if the president represented "a different view than the ruling coalition (it) provides more balance... which is better for a democratic system." During the election campaign much media attention has focused on the lucrative network of companies owned by Mrs. Pirc Musar and her husband, amid allegations that they had put some of their fortune into tax havens. In one jibe, ex-PM Janša described the runoff as a clash between the values of Slovenian independence on the one hand and the values of tax havens on the other.

In Slovenia's parliamentary system the role of the president is mainly ceremonial. However, Pirc Musar has indicated that she would conduct herself differently to the outgoing president, Borut Pahor, who rarely intervened on domestic political issues during his two five-year terms in office. "I have never been quiet when it was necessary to speak up, especially not in the last two years", she said when she entered the presidential race at the end of September. After the last Janez Janša government took over I spoke out, because the rule of law was falling apart before our very eyes. The 54-year-old has said that she would like to see Slovenia connect to "core Europe", especially with countries that believe in human rights and constitutional values.