



By: TA | AP Brief

Centrist D66 party confirmed victory in Dutch election



A nail-biter national election in the Netherlands came down to postal votes from Dutch citizens living abroad, with the centrist D66 party eking out a win over anti-Islam lawmaker Geert Wilders' far-right Party for Freedom according to a final tally by national news agency ANP.

The pair will each have 26 seats in parliament, as the roughly 28,000 vote advantage for D66 was not enough for the party to pick up an additional legislator.

Using a nearly complete ballot count and an estimation based on previous patterns, **ANP had predicted** D66 would receive the most votes but the question of the additional seat was unclear until late Monday evening.

Speaking to reporters last week, Rob Jetten, the 38-year-old leader of D66, called the outcome a "historic result" and said he was proud but felt a "great responsibility" to the country.

Jetten would be the country's youngest and first openly gay leader.

Despite a second place finish, the result is an 11 seat loss for Wilders' party, known by its Dutch acronym PVV.

Forming a coalition

Two years ago, the **PVV surged to victory** in a stunning lurch to the far right for a nation once famed as a beacon of tolerance.

But the 62-year-old has lost support since forming and then bringing down a four-party coalition that was notorious for infighting and which did not manage to agree on a tough package of measures to rein in migration to the Netherlands.

Wilders has reacted to the loss by suggesting on social media there may have been voting irregularities, a claim widely rebuked by local municipalities which organize voting as well as the Electoral Council, the independent body that certifies election results.

Forming a coalition is likely to take weeks or months

The council will formalize the outcome on Friday.

In the splintered Dutch political landscape, forming a **coalition** is likely to take weeks or months.

As the largest party, D66 will get the first crack at putting together a government. Jetten and others will meet later Tuesday to begin the process.