



# Weekly Briefing

**Slovakia political briefing:**  
**First technocrat cabinet in Slovakia's history**  
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## **First technocrat cabinet in Slovakia's history**

### **Summary**

*Following the resignation of Eduard Heger from the post of Prime Minister, Slovakia's President Zuzana Čaputová confirmed that a technical government will be appointed on May 15, 2023. The head of the cabinet, which will serve until the snap election in late September, will be the current Deputy President of the National Bank of Slovakia, Ľudovít Ódor. Until the new prime minister and his cabinet members take over, the Heger government will remain in power. Heger's announced resignation would not be in force until a new cabinet is appointed.*

*The appointed government of technocrats, who will not run in the September 30, 2023 snap parliamentary elections, is meant to stabilize the situation in the country and its governing will not be used by them in the electoral campaign. The new cabinet will be the third one since the last elections, which took place in late February 2020, but the first since Slovakia gained independence in 1993 that is being referred to as a technical government.*

### **Introduction**

Slovakia's prime minister has resigned and been replaced by a caretaker, deepening the country's political crisis months before an election that looks likely to be won by a Moscow-friendly party opposed to further military aid to Ukraine.

The central bank deputy governor, Ľudovít Ódor will become a leader of a technocrat government after the prime minister, Eduard Heger, himself acting as a caretaker since losing his majority last September, stepped down.

Under Heger's center-right government, elected in 2021, Slovakia – an EU and NATO member – has proved a strong backer of Kyiv since Russia's invasion, sending weapons and, last month, its retired fleet of Soviet-made MiG fighters.

However, polls suggest the opposition Smer-SD left-wing populist party led by the former prime minister Robert Fico, who has opposed military aid to Ukraine and blamed “Ukrainian fascists” for starting the war there in 2014, is on course to win the 30 September elections. Fico, who was leader from 2006 to 2010 and again from 2012 to 2018, has also railed against

“western propaganda” and he would force weapons shipments from elsewhere to be rerouted and veto “pointless” further sanctions on Russia.

The country’s political landscape has become increasingly fragmented as Heger’s coalition has been progressively weakened by soaring energy and food costs and the impact of the war in Ukraine. He quit after a spate of senior ministerial resignations. The agriculture and foreign ministers were the latest to step down, leaving Heger officially in charge of several ministries – including finance – since the jobs cannot be filled while the government is acting in a caretaker capacity.

Therefore, PM Eduard Heger asked the president to remove his authority and to leave the president space to try with a technocrat government to stably and peacefully lead Slovakia to democratic parliamentary elections.

### **Slovakian president picks technocrat government after prime minister quits**

At first, acting Prime Minister Eduard Heger admitted that Slovakia was in a serious crisis, a crisis of chaos, but called on President Zuzana Čaputová not to appoint a technocratic government. Heger blamed recent crises, including the war in Ukraine and high inflation – and, in part, himself – for the chaos that Slovakia had been enduring.

However, Heger's Agriculture Minister, Samuel Vlčan (OLaNO nom.), decided to step down over a scandal connected to a subsidy from the Environment Ministry for Vlčan's firm. The police are investigating the scandal. Another member of the government, Foreign Minister, Rastislav Káčer (Demokrati), announced his resignation following the prime minister's unscheduled televised address, in which Heger admitted that Slovakia is in 'a chaotic crisis'.

Eduard Heger’s reaction to the situation was that he proposed to the president replacing Vlčan and Káčer with her own nominees to solve the current government crisis. However, the president refused the offer. Heger also offered to resign, but at the same time he wanted the president to keep the already appointed ministers in their posts. The president said no to this proposal as well.

Therefore, the prime minister asked the president to remove his caretaker government from power. The caretaker government was appointed at the end of last year after Heger's government lost a confidence vote in parliament on December 15, 2022. This cabinet has had to consult the president on many matters since then.

Slovak Prime Minister Eduard Heger will step down months before early elections planned for September 30, 2023 after his caretaker cabinet started to fall apart. The truth is that Slovakia, traumatized by conflicts, doesn't deserve the political crisis to continue for even one more day. Four ministers had left the stopgap administration since PM Heger lost a vote of no confidence. The latest casualty was the above-mentioned agriculture minister's troubles (a company he owns had received 1.4 million euros).

Constitutionalists say that regardless of its character and composition, the cabinet must gain a parliamentary vote of confidence within 90 days. Without a vote of confidence, the cabinet will have to resign. However, even a cabinet that has resigned remains in power until a new one is appointed.

President Zuzana Čaputová is going to appoint a government of experts to be headed by current deputy governor of the National Bank of Slovakia (NBS), Ľudovít Ódor.

For most Slovaks, the next prime minister is a relatively unknown figure, but in economic circles he is considered a highly-capable official and an expert in his field. From his beginnings in public administration, he emphasized analysis, data and facts. He had the ambition of bringing a more substantive debate to key areas, from education to the sustainability of the pension system, and steps towards catching up with the West.

His CV shows that he participated in important reforms, the significance of which no one can explain better to the average Slovak than him. A Most-Híd party nominee, Ódor has been the NBS deputy governor since 2018.

He claims that at work he always tries to separate the professional from the personal, so he has had no problem cooperating with politicians from both political camps - whether it was former SDKÚ finance minister Ivan Mikloš, or his current boss and NBS governor, Peter Kažimír (formerly Smer-SD).

He is the co-author of the flat tax, participated in the pension reform, the introduction of the euro, the creation of budget rules, and was behind the establishment of the Value for Money project, the subject of criticism in recent weeks for allegedly slowing down the construction of highways.

The composition of the new cabinet, aside from the prime minister, has not been announced. Media speculate that Miroslav Wlachovský, an experienced diplomat and former ambassador to the U.K. and Denmark could serve as the foreign minister.

## **Conclusion**

Slovak President Zuzana Čaputová picked central bank Deputy Governor Ľudovít Ódor to lead a technocrat government after caretaker Prime Minister Eduard Heger quit just months before early elections in September. Slovakia has struggled through months of political uncertainty as Heger's ruling coalition was weakened, coming amid a period of high inflation and war in neighboring Ukraine. The country's political scene is fragmented ahead of an election that the largest opposition party, opposed to continued military aid to Kyiv, may win.

Heger, who has led the government since 2021 - most recently in a caretaker capacity - quit after a spate of senior resignations and opposition calls to move aside. President Čaputová will name the rest of Ódor's technocrat government after May 15, 2023. Slovakia lurched into crisis in September last year when Heger's ruling center-right coalition lost its majority after the libertarian SaS party quit, unhappy with efforts to help people hit by soaring energy and food costs.

PM Heger lost a no-confidence motion in December 2022 and, in January 2023, lawmakers agreed to early elections in September. In the past week the agriculture minister stepped down following a scandal over a subsidy for a firm he owns. A few days later the foreign minister also offered his resignation. The departures left PM Heger leading several ministries, including finance, as such posts cannot be filled when the government is in a caretaker capacity. Therefore, the only option and a way-out is a technocrat government to stably and peacefully lead Slovakia to democratic parliamentary elections.

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