
AUSTRIANS VOTE ENVIRONMENTALIST OVER POPULIST FOR PRESIDENCY

05.12.2016

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EuroNews

Pollsters had thought that the race would be too close to call but soon after results started coming in, Van Der Bellen had already taken a decisive lead with 53.6 percent of the vote.

The far right Freedom Party candidate, Norbert Hofer, conceded defeat in an surprisingly conciliatory fashion when he announced: I have always said, the winner will be a good winner and the loser will be a good loser. And I ask all the people who have voted for me to accept that in a democracy the voter is always right, always. And that in the end we all have to unite and stand together. That is of special importance.

A relieved Alexander Van Der Bellen talked about his ambition to be a President that the Austrians will call their own saying: I hope that when people recognise me on the street or on the village green or in Viennas underground six years from now at the end of my term theyll say, look, there is our federal president, not the federal president but everyones president.

Faced with a stark choice between a far-right, populist or a pro European environmentalist, the Austrian people chose the latter.

EU leaders will be relieved at this result which was widely seen as a gauge for the wave of anti-establishment, right wing populism sweeping Western democracies.

German Vice Chancellor Sigmar Gabriel summed up the mood among European leaders saying: A weight has fallen from all of Europes shoulders. If it is confirmed, the result is a clear victory for reason against right-wing populism.

Kaynak/Source: