



# The European Elections 2019: Seizing a new hope

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The recent European elections are bringing new hope for the future of the European project and a progressive one. On the one hand, the predicted national-populist wave had a surge in several countries, but a contained one. On the other hand, the higher turn-out was driven by more European citizens willing to vote for a more active Europe in forward-looking causes: climate change, social fairness, digital governance, tax justice and democratic standards.

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Socialists and Social-Democrats can build on this new drive to break-up the current European status-quo dominated by conservatives and the neo-liberal agenda which has been in denial of mounting problems and has blocked many real European-wide solutions. Now with a larger coalition of pro-European progressive forces a bolder agenda in the EU institutions can be pushed forward.

The times of the usual grand coalition between the EPP and S&D Groups in the European Parliament are no longer. S&D remains the second most important group in the European Parliament and holds a central role exploring alliances to the left and centre in order to create a new kind of majority. This important outcome was made possible by high-quality heads of lists and more gender balance in many national cases and also by a remarkable campaign conducted by the PES lead candidate Frans Timmermans.

Some important poles of renewed socialism and social-democracy could assert themselves. Spain and Portugal put Iberia in a leading role to turn the page of painful austerity with a more ambitious vision for a European Union open to the world and pushing for renewed causes. Nordic countries reassert their historic and solid role in the same direction. British Labour is resisting in the best way it can to the chaos of the Brexit situation. In Hungary and Poland, Progressive forces are notably reorganising themselves to deal with the hard bastions of national-populism there. There needs to be some lessons learnt when democratic standards are not respected such as in Romania.

Nevertheless there are also some challenging situations. In France, socialism is to be rebuilt with a progressive European sovereignty as the best compass to drive in the most presidential political system of the EU Member States. A synthesis of vision and capacity to deliver concrete solutions to our citizens is always needed. In Germany, the long and central tradition of social-democracy is now confronted with the responsibility to invent new syntheses providing social fairness when facing challenges such as climate change and the digital revolution. These two countries also have particular responsibilities in the direction of European integration, be it foreign affairs, defence or economic and monetary union.

All this is also the collective responsibility of the European Socialists, Social-Democrats and Labour. They should seize the opening created by these European elections, taking note of the lessons to be learnt from the process and now pushing for a renewed agenda, leading on key issues and also with stronger legitimacy in terms of gender, age and geographical balance.