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'The red wave is here!'

Iratxe García Pérez, leader of the Social Democrats in the European Parliament, on what the SPD's victory in the German elections means for Europe

According to preliminary results, the Social Democratic Party (SPD) won Germany's parliamentary elections this weekend with 25,7 per cent of the vote – ahead of the Conservatives, whose vote share fell to a historic low of 24,1 per cent. What signal does this result send to Europe?

> The victory of SPD is great news for Germany and for the whole European social democratic family. Against what was said over many years, Germans have valued the key role of the SPD in the last governments and have voted for more Europe, more social and green policies, more respect for their citizens. So it looks clear that after Merkel, it is time for Olaf Scholz to lead the next federal government, a government that should put the focus on the citizens, the most vulnerable ones, without forgetting the big transformations of our time.

Europe only played a minor role in the election campaign. At the same time, the EU faces many challenges over the next months and years – from implementing the Green Deal to reforming its economic governance. What do you expect from the next German government in this regard?

> I consider that without the SPD in the last government – and without Scholz as Finance Minister and Vice Chancellor –, the German Government would have been much more reluctant to approve an historic recovery package like Next Generation EU (NGEU) to tackle the current economic crisis, contrary to the way the EU tackled the 2008 financial crisis. The NGEU is the perfect answer that summarises the social democratic agenda: tackle the digital and green transitions through new economic instruments based on solidarity and new own resources for the EU. Therefore, we expect that the next German Government, led by Scholz, will only continue this good path.

We seem to witness a wave of support for social-democratic parties across Europe – just two weeks ago, the Labour Party won the elections in Norway. Why do you think this is happening?

> I believe that after many years of austerity and individualism, the Covid-19 pandemic made very clear that we cannot leave everything in the hands of the markets, that the public sphere and states matter and are more needed than ever. That is where our political family has always been: in the defence of the public sector, of the most vulnerable people, of the many and not the few. We would like to have many more red governments in Europe, but I think is a really good sign the growing support and good perspectives for the coming elections. The red wave is here!

This interview was conducted by Daniel Kopp.



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Iratxe García Pérez is a Spanish politician of the Spanish Socialist Workers' Party. She has served as Member of the European Parliament since 2004, and as the Leader of the Progressive Alliance of Socialists and Democrats (S&D) parliamentary group since 2019. She also represents the S&D on the Executive Board for the Conference on the Future of Europe.