

# General Elections in Sweden

## 19<sup>th</sup> September 2010

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### Results

**The outgoing right coalition wins the general elections in Sweden and the far right makes its debut in Parliament.**

The Alliance coalition led by outgoing Prime Minister Fredrik Reinfeldt came out ahead in the general elections in Sweden on 19<sup>th</sup> September. Together the four Alliance parties – the Moderate Assembly (M), the Centre Party (C), the People's Party-Liberals (FpL) and the Christian Democratic Party (KD) – won 49.2% of the vote (+1 in comparison with the previous general elections on 17<sup>th</sup> September 2006) and 172 seats. The Alliance failed however to win an absolute majority in the Riksdag, the only Chamber in Parliament (175 seats). The Moderates won 30% (107 seats, +10), the Centrists 6.6% (22 seats, -7), the Liberals 7.1% (24 seats, -4) and the Christian Democrats, 5.6% (19 seats, -5).

The four rightwing parties pulled ahead of the red-green coalition (Rödgröna), led by Mona Sahlin, which won 44% of the vote (-2.1 points) and 157 seats. The left bloc rallies the Social Democratic Party (SAP) which won 30.9% of the vote (113 seats, -17), the Environment Party-Greens (MP), 7.2% (25 seats +6) and the Left Party (Vp), 5.6% (19 seats, -3).

The Moderate Party is the grand winner of this election with the SAP only just pulling ahead of it – this is a unique political situation in a country that was dominated by social democracy during the entire 20<sup>th</sup> century.

The Sweden Democrats (SD), a far right party led by Jimmie Akesson succeeded in making a breakthrough winning 5.7% of the vote (+2.8 points) i.e. nearly double the percentage they won four years ago. This party will therefore be making its debut in Parliament.

Turnout, which is traditionally high in Sweden, rose to 82.1% i.e. nearly the same as that recorded in the election on 17<sup>th</sup> September 2006 (81.99%). Around 2.2 of the 7.1 million Swedish voters made their choice ahead of time i.e. +400,000 in comparison with 2006.

Outgoing Prime Minister Fredrik Reinfeldt (M) won but did not succeed in maintaining his absolute majority in the Riksdag in spite of the many warnings he made during the electoral campaign. "We called on the Swedes to be careful and responsible and to vote clearly to continue with a majority government," he declared on the day of the election. "If you want to wake up on Monday morning with a stable, majority government then the Alliance government is the solution," he repeated. "The biggest bloc has to govern and it is the Alliance," he maintained after the announcement of the results. Fredrik Reinfeldt has succeeded where no other had succeeded before him in Sweden: to retain power after completing a full term in office.

"It is not the result I had hoped for in these elections," he declared excluding government in coalition with the far right. "I was clear. I am not going to cooperate or be dependent on the Sweden Democrats," he repeated. Speaking of the possibility of his coalition failing to achieve the absolute majority in Parliament the Prime Minister said he might try to find support with the Environment Party-Greens. This is a possibility which the spokespeople of both ecologist party, Peter Eriksson and Maria Wetterstrand firmly rejected before the election. Several ecologist personalities have said they are ready to work with the Alliance forces to avoid the far right from having any influence over work in Parliament. "It will be very difficult for us, after this

*campaign, to look our electorate in the eye and say that we will cooperate with this government," stressed Maria Wetterstrand.*

*"We have a scenario that most of the Swedish electorate wanted to avoid which means that a xenophobic party is the king maker. It is likely that Fredrik Reinfeldt will open negotiations with the Greens. I do not believe he will offer them a seat in government but he may try to convince them to enter a certain kind of cooperation and seek their support of the government with respect to some subjects, this will enable them to influence political work," declared Ulf Bjereld, political scientist at the University of Göteborg.*

*"Even if no bloc wins a clear majority I believe that we will be able to continue government. We can undertake our policy quite well within the context of a minority government. This of course is on condition that the left does not join the far right to approve a motion of censure. But I do not believe in this hypothesis. What might happen is that the Sweden Democrats, without prior warning, will approve proposals put forward by the social democrats at the last minute. This already happened in the 1990's when New Democracy (a far right party that sat in the Swedish Parliament from 1991-1994) was represented in Parliament," declared the leader of the Christian Democrats, Göran Hägglund.*

With 30.9% of the vote the Social Democratic Party has achieved the poorest result in its history. *"We have lost. We were unable to win people's confidence back. It is now that Fredrik Reinfeldt should say how he plans to govern Sweden without allowing the Sweden Democrats any room for influence" declared Mona Sahlin.* The SAP has undeniably suffered because of its leadership; Mona Sahlin, who is not very popular, struggled against the competition put up by Maria Wetterstrand, the highly popular Greens spokesperson and she found it difficult to provide real cohesion to the coalition that she led. The party seems to have seen the defection of some of its electorate because it did not understand or accept its alliance with the Environment Party-Greens. According to some exit polls the far right took advantage of the discontent of former social democrat voters.

More generally the left forces which stood together in an extremely heterogeneous coalition did not succeed

in putting forward a real alternative to motivate the Swedes during the electoral campaign in which the outgoing Alliance coalition managed to assert its agenda. *"The 2006 defeat can be explained in the main by the fact that the social democrats ignored the growing problem of unemployment. Since then the Liberals have succeeded in pushing through with their political agenda as well as their vision of the issue. Whilst they thought it would be easy for them to take the upper hand in these elections after four years on the opposition benches the social democrats seem, on the contrary, to be a party that has not reformed offering the same old faces and the same old discourse,"* analyses Andreas Johansson, professor at the University of Göteborg.

The difficulties experienced by the Swedish left are common to all of the social democratic parties in Europe who are struggling to reform and appear credible in the face of the right which is in power in nearly 4/5<sup>ths</sup> of the EU's States. *"The Social Democrats are encountering the same problems as those like them elsewhere in Europe. They cannot adapt to the economic transition which is taking us over from industrial capitalism to globalised capitalism,"* indicates Marie Demker, professor of political science at the University of Göteborg.

*"The irony of it is that the decline of the left is happening at a time when all political parties and society are accepting the model it has been building since the 1930's. For a long time the right campaigned denouncing "socialism" and the Swedish Welfare State. But this approach cannot be adopted any longer. On the contrary it has accepted the social democratic heritage and has totally integrated the social democratic system into its discourse, just adding modernisation in small doses,"* notes journalist of the daily newspaper Dagens Nyheter, Henrik Brors.

With the entry of Sweden Democrats into Parliament Sweden is *"conforming"* with a trend within the EU since up until now the country was one of the rare ones in which the far right was absent from Parliament. The Swedish integration model, as others in Europe, is struggling. Recent immigration, different from that of previous years, seems not to be as easily accepted in an extremely homogeneous country which questions its identity and the future of its social model in a globalised

world. These questions are shared by other Europeans. Some days before the elections Jimmie Akesson (DS) was already celebrating: *"Just the simple fact of us being in parliament will frighten them and we shall force them to adapt to our position, notably with regard to the migration policy because they are afraid of losing votes in the following elections,"* he declared. He promised *"not to cause problems in the Riksdag."* *"We shall assume our responsibilities. This is my promise to the Swedish people,"* he indicated.

Björn Söder, secretary general of the Sweden Democrats said he hoped that the Alliance forces would negotiate with his party. *"We hope to be contacted tomorrow by the other parties,"* he said.

The Alliance coalition is due to form a minority government. This might win the support of the Environment Party-Greens. The re-election of the right in Sweden has put an end to the hegemony of the Social Democratic Party. The country now has political alternation just like its European neighbours. The famous Swedish model has been weakened. *"An era has come to an end,"* was to be read in the editorial in the daily Dagens Nyheter. The Alliance's victory however is not so much a schism but rather it bears witness to a deep change in society. The Svenska Dagbladet maintains that it is time for the Swedes to invent *"a new national image"*.

#### General election results 19<sup>th</sup> September 2010 in Sweden

Turnout: 82.10%

Political Parties	No of votes won	% of votes won	No of seats won
<b>Social Democratic Party (SAP)</b>	1 780 974	30.9	113
<b>Moderate Assembly Party (M)</b>	1 729 010	30	107
<b>Environment Party-Greens (MP)</b>	415 879	7.2	25
<b>People's Party-Liberals (FpL)</b>	407 816	7.1	24
<b>Centre Party (C)</b>	380 215	6.6	22
<b>Sweden Democrats (SD)</b>	330 157	5.7	20
<b>Christian Democrat Party (KD)</b>	324 715	5.6	19
<b>Left Party (Vp)</b>	321 854	5.6	19
<b>Others</b>	80 644	1.3	0

Source : <http://www.val.se> Source: Internet site Swedish elections (<http://www.val.se/val/val2010/valnatt/R/riks/index.html> ).

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