

# Uncertainty remains after the Spanish parliamentary elections in which the People's Party of outgoing Prime Minister, Mariano Rajoy came out ahead.

Corinne Deloy

## Results

### Abstract:

The People's Party (PP) of outgoing Prime Minister Mariano Rajoy came out ahead in the parliamentary elections that took place on 20th December in Spain. With 28.72% of the vote, the party won 123 seats in the Congress of Deputies, the lower house of the Spanish Parliament, i.e. 63 less than in the previous parliamentary elections that took place on 20th November 2011. The PP also won 124 seats in the Senate (12 less). The PP was followed by the Socialist Workers' Party (PSOE), led by Pedro Sanchez, which won 22.01% of the vote and 90 seats (20 less) and 47 Senators (1 less).

The two main Spanish parties did however achieve the lowest ever results in their history. Together they only rallied half of the Spanish vote (50.02%) in comparison to nearly three quarters in 2011 (73.40%) and 83.80% in 2008.

The two parties drew ahead of Podemos (We can) a far left party led by Pablo Iglesias, which won 19.03% of the vote and 63 seats and Ciudadanos (C's), a centrist party led by Alberto Rivera, which won 13.93% of the vote and 40 seats. Pablo Iglesia's party also won 14 seats in the Senate.

*"For the first time at the end of an electoral evening the Spanish will go to bed without knowing the name of the new leader of the government,"* declared José Pablo Ferrandiz, researcher at the pollster Metropolis, some days before the vote. His forecast was correct.

*"Tonight for certain, our country's history will have*

*changed,"* maintained the leader of Podemos, Pablo Iglesias, adding, *"The results show that the two-party system, in force since the end of Franco's dictatorship forty years ago, has had its time. It is an historic day for Spain (...) we are starting a new political era in our country. Spain will no longer be the same."*

The parliamentary elections on 20th December have caused great disruption to the balance of power in the Spanish political arena, which has been dominated since 1982 by a two-party system. (PP/PSOE). Looking at the results it is difficult to say who will govern Spain over the next four years and whether the next Parliament will be able to form a government.

Turnout was higher than that recorded four years ago during the same election: it totalled 73.20%, i.e. 1.53 points more than in November 2011.

**Parliamentary election results of 20th December 2015 in Spain**

Turnout : 73,20% (71.88% in the Senatorial elections)

Political Parties	Congress of Deputies			Senate
	Number of votes won	% of votes won	No. of seats won	No. of seats won
<b>People's Party (PP)</b>	7 215 530	28,72	123	124
<b>Socialist Workers' Party (PSOE)</b>	5 530 693	22,01	90	47
<b>Podemos</b>	4 780 963	19,03	63	14
<b>Ciudadanos (C's)</b>	3 500 446	13,93	40	0
<b>Others</b>	3 638 809	16,31	34	23

Source : <http://resultadosgenerales2015.interior.es/congreso/#/ES201512-CON-ES/ES>

"The People's Party is still the main political force, preferred by the Spanish, and as a result if the polls prove right it will be the only force to have won in the elections," indicated Pablo Casado, spokesperson of the party of the outgoing government.

Mariano Rajoy said that he was ready to form a government whilst noting that negotiations would be complicated: "the winner of the election must try to put a government together. I shall try to form a government, one which is stable, but it will not be easy."

"It is up to the political party which wins the most votes to try and form a government," the Socialist leader Pedro Sanchez said.

"The People's Party will be the first to try and form a coalition but the left bloc has a better chance because it has won more seats," indicated Ignacio Jurado, a political analyst. "It is about whether there will be a coalition of parties against Mariano Rajoy," maintained his colleague, Antonio Barroso.

*A priori*, there are four possible solutions: a coalition rallying the People's Party and Ciudadanos; a PSOE/ Podemos coalition, a minority government led by the People's Party and finally a grand coalition with the PP and the PSOE. We must not forget the MPs from the regionalist parties either, on whom the right-wing and especially the left-wing forces might possibly turn to for support.

The first two coalitions seem impossible since neither

of them would comprise an absolute majority. A minority government seems difficult to support given the parties on the left who would certainly oppose this. Finally although the PP has not ruled out the possibility of a grand coalition, it has however said that it cannot do this with the present Socialist leader Pedro Sanchez. Some political analysts are already forecasting the organisation of early parliamentary elections in the spring of 2016.

"Podemos's biggest success to date has been to capitalise on the anger felt about the system. Elsewhere in Europe and notably in France, this has been channelled by the far right. In Spain by the far left," indicated Eurne Uriarte, a political analyst. This analysis is shared by Ignacio Sanchez-Cuenca, director of the Juan March Institute: "In spite of the pressure being placed on the country's social fabric, in spite of the enormous phenomenon of the Indignados, Spain is still a fundamentally reformist, moderate country. The feeling of anger, which is real and quite justified with the crisis, has not yet led to extremist options."

"By making the public believe that politics are subject to the economy, exasperation has exploded against the system in place," stresses Josep Ramoneda, a philosopher, who views the vote as a punishment for the two main political parties. "The People's Party and the Socialist Party have turned the institutions into entitlement legacies; this is the poison of the two-party system. The conservatives are mainly linked to

*inequalities, to vulnerability and to a lack of care vis-à-vis the citizens; as for the socialists, dominated by baronies, they are entrenched in an ideological vacuum and have run out of steam. In 2011 the Indignados shouted "You do not represent us!" Due to their inability to see, it remains that today, the hegemonic parties are reaping what they sowed."*

*"To date we thought along a left/right axis. But the new parties have created a gulf: a generational gap. The Spanish who were born into a democracy are much more demanding regarding corruption and the*

*implementation of electoral programmes and also about the defence of the healthcare system and education."*

Stresses Enrique Gil-Calvo, a political analyst from the University Complutense - Madrid,

Long negotiations will undoubtedly be necessary to try and form a government in Spain. To be elected head of government a candidate has to rally the absolute majority of MPs to his name in the first round of voting, then a simple majority in the second round.

The new Congress of Deputies will convene for the first time on 13th January next.

## Marcelo Rebelo de Sousa wins the presidential election in Portugal in the first round

### Abstract:

Marcelo Rebelo de Sousa, former leader of the Social Democratic Party (PSD) (1996-1999), supported by the PSD and the People's Party (PP) became President of the Portuguese Republic in the first round of the election that took place on 24th January with 52% of the vote. Antonio de Sampaio da Novoa, supported by LIVRE/Tempo de Avançar (Free/Time to move forward) (L/TDA) and the Communist Workers' Party (PCTP/MRPP), came second with 22.89% of the vote. Third place went to MEP Marisa Matias (Left Bloc, BE), who won 10.13% of the vote. She was followed by Maria de Belem, former leader of the Socialist Party (2011-2014), who was standing as an independent candidate; she won 4.24% of the vote. The other six candidates won under 4% of the vote.

### Results

Turnout was slightly higher (+2.32 points) than in the first round of the previous presidential election on 23rd January 2011, lying at 48.84%.

Marcelo Rebelo de Sousa did not therefore counter tradition in Portugal which deems that the President of the Republic be elected in the first round. Mr de Sousa, a professor in law, former Parliamentary Affairs Minister (1982-1983) and former commentator on the TV channel TVI, who stands on the "left of the right", undertook a consensual campaign that focused on social justice and the country's financial balance, constantly promoting the non-partisan side of his character. *"I shall be the president of no party,"* he declared promising to *"be a referee above the crowd"*, *"a free, independent president of the Republic"* *"He sought consensus away from his political camp with the aim of winning both votes on the left and right,"* indicated José Antonio Passos Palmeira, a political expert.

Marcelo Rebelo de Sousa was also conciliatory regarding Prime Minister Antonio Costa (Socialist Party, PS) and said that he wanted to overcome divisions in Portugal, a country that has been torn apart since the general elections on 4th October last, which were won by the PSD but without an absolute majority. On 24th November the President of the Republic Antonio Cavaco Silva (PSD) had to appoint Antonio Costa as head of government. The latter won the support (without participation) of the parties on the radical left: the United Democratic Coalition (CDU) and the Left Bloc (BE). According to Antonio Costa Pinto, a political expert, Marcelo Rebelo de Sousa *"will not be the political enemy of the socialist government."*

*"The president of the Republic must not challenge the government in office. I shall do everything to guarantee its duration,"* declared Marcelo Rebelo de Sousa, who deemed *"it absolutely absurd"* to think that he would dissolve parliament as soon as he came into office. *"Stability is vital, we have to avoid having governments that only last six months or a year,"* he maintained, adding *"the priority is to strengthen political stability, the vital entente to govern. It is not the time for division."* *"I want to re-establish national unity as our country is emerging from a deep economic and social crisis,"* declared Marcelo Rebelo de Sousa. He said that he would use his influence with the socialist government to

prevent any further downturn in the Portuguese economy.

The head of State can dissolve parliament six months after his entry into office via article 172 of the Constitution – which automatically leads to new general elections. Marcelo Rebelo de Sousa would not be able to invoke this article before the month of April next.

Supporters of the left, and notably the socialists, were divided between several candidates Maria de Belem, Antonio de Sampaio de Nova and Henrique Neto. The Socialist Party chose not to support any of the candidates in the first round of the election, which evidently was to the advantage of Marcelo Rebelo de Sousa. In spite of his commitments the victory of the Social Democratic candidate is bad news for the socialist Prime Minister.

67 year-old Marcelo Rebelo de Sousa, is a graduate in law from the University of Lisbon. He was a professor of law before becoming a journalist. He founded and managed the weekly *Expresso* in 1973. After the Carnation Revolution in April 1974 and when democracy returned to Portugal, he was one of the founders of the PSD and was elected MP of the Assembly of the Republic, the only chamber of parliament, without relinquishing his academic career.

In 1981 he became Secretary of State for the Presidency of the Council in Francisco Pinto Balsemao's government (PSD). In 1982 he was appointed Minister for Parliamentary Affairs. In 1989, he failed in his bid to take Lisbon's town hall, and was beaten in the local election by Jorge Sampaio (PS). In 1996, he was elected Chair of the PSD, a post from which he resigned three years later after the failure of his project to form a coalition with the People's Party.

For a long time Marcelo Rebelo de Sousa hosted a programme on the TV channel TV1 before giving this up to work on the presidential campaign.

During the presidential election the Portuguese usually try to appoint an arbiter of the political playing field rather than a partisan head of State.

This election is therefore more personalised even though paradoxically, the Portuguese heads of State have always been important within their own political party. The Portuguese are not afraid of political co-habitation either. Twice (in 1987 and in 2006 for example), they elected a president from

the opposite end of the political scale from the parliamentary majority that they had brought to office just a few months previously.

Marcelo Rebelo de Sousa will be sworn in on 9th March next.

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