

Beat: Politics

## The conservative Diaz Ayuso sweeps the Madrid regional elections

### She will rule alone

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**USPA NEWS** - "The Popular Party has won the regional elections" in Madrid. "Isabel Díaz Ayuso will continue to be the president that Madrid needs," an exultant president of the conservative Popular Party, Pablo Casado, said this Tuesday night from the balcony of the headquarters of his formation. Madrid held early regional elections this Tuesday, on an atypical day because it was a working day and because the elections were read in a national key as the beginning of change in Spain.

But the victory of the conservatives is a personal victory for her candidate, Isabel Díaz Ayuso, who will continue as president of the Madrid regional government. Before the elections, she was the main opponent of Prime Minister Pedro SÁnchez because, in the face of the restrictions imposed by the Spanish Government, the Madrid president kept the bars and theaters open, and for long periods she was able to use positive figures in the fight against COVID-19. Pedro SÁnchez himself took the reins of the socialist electoral campaign to unseat Díaz Ayuso, but failed. The Socialists and, especially, Prime Minister SÁnchez, are the big losers in the Madrid elections.

Isabel Díaz Ayuso won 65 seats in the Madrid regional Parliament, 35 more than in the elections of two years ago and seven more than the three left-wing parties would add in a hypothetical coalition: the Socialist Party won 24 seats, 13 less than it did before two years; the More Madrid party won another 24 seats and the far-left coalition Unidas Podemos (United We Can), led by former Vice President of the Spanish Government Pablo Iglesias, won 10 seats, three more than in 2019. Among the three leftist formations there are 58 seats. For its part, the far-right Vox party won 13 seats, one more than two years ago. The centrist Ciudadanos (Citizens), which lost its 25 previous seats, was left out of the regional Parliament.

Madrid does not change legislature. The Parliament that came out of the elections on Tuesday will be valid for two years. But the most important thing about these elections is that the conservative Popular Party will be able to govern alone, with specific support from the far-right Vox. Until now, he ruled in coalition with the centrist Citizens, whose alleged infidelity led to the early calling of elections.

The electoral campaign for these elections was different from all previous ones. To the union of all the parties against the conservative candidate was added the violence unleashed in some rallies, with attacks on the Police, and the sending of eight letters containing rifle bullets and a knife addressed, among others, to the United We Can candidate, Pablo Iglesias; the Minister of the Home Affairs of the Government of Spain, Fernando Grande Marlaska, and the director of the Civil Guard. It was the campaign of fear; fear of threats, fear of the extreme right and fear of the extreme left.

The participation was 80.73% of the census, 16 points more than two years ago and a historical and unexpected figure in a working day. There was concern about a possible large abstention, but the Madrilenians responded to the call of the polls. Some, to defend the policy of the conservative government of Isabel Díaz Ayuso; others, to try to evict her from the presidential office. Analysts wondered at night if the results and participation can be extrapolated to Spanish national politics. The answer is no.

"Sanchismo does not enter Madrid," said Isabel Díaz Ayuso after confirming her broad victory. The conservative candidate was aware that her rival was the Prime Minister, Pedro SÁnchez. So was the socialist candidate, Ángel Gabilondo, who congratulated the Popular Party for his victory and admitted that his conciliatory message did not penetrate the electorate. "I did not succeed," he said at a press conference after confirming the results of the elections. The Socialist Party is now the third political force in the Madrid region because More Madrid surpasses it in number of votes and the two parties tie for seats.

The conservative victory claimed another victim: the former Vice President of the Spanish Government and candidate of the far-left coalition United We Can, Pablo Iglesias, announced that he is leaving politics. "I drop all my charges," he announced. And the centrist candidate, Edmundo Bal, regretted that the people of Madrid have turned their back on his project, but he announced that from this Wednesday he will work to consolidate his integrating program and return to the institutions.

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