



Esther Niubó, director of Rafael Campalans Foundation and Spokeswoman of Catalan Socialist Party (PSC)

To face division and immobility: socialists propose dialogue and a federal reform of Spain

Parliamentary elections held on Sunday, 27 September 2015, will mark the political future of Catalonia. Those who fraudulently considered these elections as a plebiscite have now to face reality: pro-independence parties have not got the 50% of the total vote needed to make their separatist project come true. Not only that, the main separatist alliance, *Junts pel Sí* (“Together for Yes”), that includes CDC (right-wing Catalan Nationalist Party) and ERC (left-wing Catalan Independence Party) won 62 seats, which represents a decrease of 9 seats compared to the results of 2012 (they won 71 seats separately). In fact, the addition of CiU (the Nationalist coalition) and ERC has historically had an absolute majority in the Catalan Parliament.

Furthermore, the growth of participation (reaching an historical 77,4%) has made *Ciudadanos* (Citizens) stronger, as it collects votes from those who mistakenly thought that it was the best way to vote against Artur Mas (the current Catalan President) and his pro-independence project. In this scenario of polarization and emergence of new political forces, after having suffered an internal split, the Catalan Socialist Party (PSC) has been able to maintain almost the same level of votes that in 2012, having been consolidated as the third political group in Parliament. PSC is now the main Catalanist non-independence party of the left, topping the list of *ICV-Podemos*, which has had a worse result than in 2012. Last, the far-left separatist *CUP* party, which won 10 seats, has now the key of the Catalan president investiture.

However, if there is a clear loser of the Catalan elections it is undoubtedly the Popular Party, whose ultra-conservative and radical position has made many voters look for another ring-wing option, as *Ciudadanos*.

Several evidences emerge from this analysis: if the elections had been a plebiscite, as pro-independence parties defended, then Artur Mas would have lost: he is now weaker than

before the elections. Nevertheless, as Catalan Socialist Party has always said, this was not a referendum, but parliamentary elections, and the main task now of the winners is to try to form a government which implements a program, something that surely won't be easy. In fact, there are lots of factors which make some people believe that Artur Mas could not become President again, or even repeat the election date in a few months.

Which is the situation now in Catalonia? There's a divided country, with an increasingly polarized society and, unfortunately, the short-term political scenario seems to be a bigger misrule than that we've had over the last 3 years. But, of course, the needs of the country cannot wait any longer.

The priorities in Catalonia are evident: on the one hand, next Catalan government should prioritize progressive economic policies for sustainable and equitable growth and job creation (and not the precarious model implemented by PP and the Catalan nationalist coalition with their Labor Reform) and put into practice a plan to decrease social inequalities and promote a real Welfare State after years of disinvestment of Artur Mas government.

On the other hand, and the most important for the Socialists in Catalonia, the only option for a successful exit of this complicated political situation is the federalist way, which ensures respect of differences and dialogue between all the actors involved, trying to remove barriers and building bridges between Catalonia and Spain.

The Catalan Socialist Party is against the immobility and the Spanish centralism of the Rajoy's government, but also against the enormous gap imposed by Catalan independentists, and more than ever, the results of these elections demonstrates that the best option is a reform of the Spanish Constitution in a federal way. Only with an agreement between Catalonia and Spain the territorial crisis can be solved. And only with a change of government in Spain led by Socialists there's an option to open a space for negotiation and agreement to leave behind the dissatisfaction, fatigue and division, and get a respectful government back, a government that works for coexistence and social justice.