

# SPAIN'S LOCAL ELECTIONS ECHO INTERNATIONALLY

Posted on May 27, 2023



Spain's local elections are setting the stage for general elections in December.

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Spaniards will go to the polls on Sunday, May 28th, to elect 8,000 local councillors and 12 regional governments.

Of the country's 12 autonomous regions, 12 are holding elections this year. Andalucia, Galicia, the Basque Country, Catalonia, and Castile-León will vote again in 2024.

The general [prediction](#) is for the country to continue the slide to the Right that has marked regional snap elections over the last three years.

The elections are widely anticipated not only for local issues but also as a reflection of the likely outcome of general elections in December. The Partido Socialista Obrero Español has governed by a narrow margin in a tricky coalition with neo-communists Unidas Podemos since 2019 under the leadership of President Pedro Sánchez.

"The results of these regional elections will, for sure, have an impact on the national elections," Xavier Coller, a professor of political science at UNED University, [told Euronews](#).

The regions with the most contested elections are those governed by the Left—Valencia, Aragon, La Rioja, Castilla-LaMancha, Cantabria, and the Balearic Islands. These regional governments may change hands. In [Valencia](#), for example, the latest polls predict that the newer party, alongside VOX and the legacy Right party, Partido Popular, will together squeeze by the left-leaning groups currently governing in a coalition.

Coalitions are also one of the major questions for these elections. Since 2015, newer parties Unidas Podemos, VOX, and Ciudadanos (which has almost disappeared since 2019) have drastically changed Spain's once firm two-party political landscape. The current national government is the first coalition government, and the experiment has been tried

in regional governments with mixed results.

A betrayal of the tripartite coalition in the southern region of Murcia by Ciudadanos in 2020 set off a string of snap elections in coalition governments and sealed the fate of Ciudadanos, once in ascent.

Following elections in the large region of Castile-León in 2022, VOX improved its position by becoming the junior partner in a coalition with the PP. VOX had hoped to repeat that success a few months later in Andalucía, where it had been part of a tripartite coalition government, but the Partido Popular won a majority and governs there alone.

Madrid, historically a stronghold for the PP, has also become the testing ground for the battle between VOX and PP on the Right. The current regional president Isabel Díaz Ayuso from the PP governs alone with support from VOX as she did not win an absolute majority. It is not clear she will win an absolute majority this time around either, making the formation of a government with VOX a possibility.

In the race for mayor of the capital, the PP's incumbent, José Martínez-Almeida, is still the leading candidate. VOX's candidate, Javier Ortega Smith, has made it clear that if Martínez-Almeida doesn't garner a majority, which he did not in the last election, VOX's support will come at the price of the vice mayorship. But Ortega Smith and Martínez-Almeida would likely have difficulty agreeing on one important policy—the city's low emission zones. Martínez-Almeida had promised to end the car restrictions the previous mayor had put in place in the very centre of the city but has instead expanded them.

Martínez-Almeida is also currently governing with Ciudadanos in a coalition that vice mayor and mayoral candidate Begoña Villacís would likely be happy to repeat.

The local elections have been marked by two national issues—Basque terrorism and water.

The Basque left-wing nationalist party, Euskal Herria Bildu, seen as the ideological inheritor of the Basque terrorist group ETA, has been key in supporting the present socialist-led national government, even though it only holds a small number of seats in the current national parliament. The PP and VOX have consistently used this weakness as rhetorical fodder against the socialist government and its partners.

The issue became part of regional elections when the Collective of Victims of Terrorism in the Basque Country (Covite) [denounced](#) the party for listing 44 candidates with a past in the terrorist group, seven of them directly responsible for murders, on its lists for local elections in the Basque Country.

Diaz Ayuso participated in the presentation of her party's candidates in Bilbao, the capital of the Basque region, [calling](#) for more judicial support to keep former terrorists out of political positions. She has also continued to receive international attention, as she did for her management of the pandemic. The British newspaper *The Times* again [lauded](#) her in a recent column.

With Spain's reservoirs overall at chronic and historic lows while drought persists, the question of water management has played a large role in the campaign in the hotter, more arid south, which is also considered 'Europe's garden' for its important fruit and vegetable industry. The issue of diverting water from the Tagus River, which supports irrigation in Murcia and some provinces of Valencia, may contribute to the downfall of the current socialist regional government. Spanish President Sánchez's national government cut back the amount of water sent from the Tagus to the Segura River, directly affecting farmers, and appears to have no plans to change course despite protests.

At the same time, Spain has requested emergency funds from the EU to help drought-affected farmers.

The case of vote buying in the enclave of [Melilla in North Africa](#) will also hang over the upcoming election.

The expected tight results will be closely watched on Sunday night.