

# Spain: Podemos ready to form government with Socialist Party

Alejandro López  
23 January 2016

Podemos leader Pablo Iglesias emerged from talks with King Felipe of Spain Friday morning to declare that his party is ready to form a “progressive government of change” with the Socialist Party (PSOE) and Communist Party-led United Left (IU).

“If the PSOE wants it, there can be a government of change,” Iglesias said. “It would be an honour for me and us to form part of that government.”

He told reporters he saw the PSOE’s leader Pedro Sánchez as prime minister and himself as deputy prime minister.

Such a government would still be 15 seats short of the 176 seats needed to form a majority government and would need the support of nationalist parties or their abstention in parliamentary votes. The inconclusive general election of December 20 produced a hung parliament, with 123 seats going to the ruling Popular Party (PP), 90 to the PSOE, 69 to Podemos and 2 to the IU.

Iglesias’ call echoes that of Sánchez, who travelled to Lisbon to meet with Portugal’s new prime minister, Antonio Costa, last week and said a “broad coalition for government with progressive forces” along Portuguese lines was needed in Spain.

Costa’s Socialist Party (PS) heads a minority government relying on support from the Portuguese equivalent of Podemos, the Left Bloc, and the Portuguese Communist Party. The “left” government’s first act in seeking to rescue Portuguese capitalism was to engineer a €2.2 billion state bailout of failing Bank Banif and to put forward a 2016 State Budget, which will impose further austerity on Portugal’s working class and youth in order to cut the country’s huge debt and budget deficit.

Since the December 20 general election, Podemos has intensified its overtures to the PSOE.

Last Wednesday, Podemos announced that its three sister parties from Valencia, Galicia and Catalonia, where it is in alliance with various nationalists and “social movements,” would integrate into one single parliamentary group rather than four separate ones. Only Valencia’s Compromís, which elected four MPs, declined, leaving Podemos with 65 rather than 69 representatives but free to negotiate an alliance with the PSOE. The PSOE was opposed to the demand for the recognition of four groups, which would give its coalition partners-to-be more representation on parliamentary committees.

A remaining hurdle is Podemos’ support for a referendum on independence in Catalonia. This option has so far been rejected by PSOE leader Sánchez, who is under pressure from the ruling elites as well as PSOE leaders from southern regions of Spain, particularly Andalusia, which are heavily dependent on Catalonia and other richer regions for subsidies.

Sánchez is facing a leadership challenge from the head of the Andalusian regional government, Susana Díaz, who wants to call a party congress to replace him. She has managed to get the PSOE executive to pass a resolution requiring that Podemos and other forces renounce a referendum on Catalan independence as a precondition for negotiations.

While Podemos has not officially renounced its call for a referendum, its main leaders have called on Sánchez to put forward proposals for forming a “left” government even if they do not include the referendum.

Podemos’ number two, Íñigo Errejón, stated that if “Pedro Sánchez wants to be invested, it is he who has to decide what project he wants for Spain... We have always said this: we are willing to reach out [to the PSOE] against evictions, in favour of a plan to modernize the economy, to stop inequality and reverse

cuts.”

Podemos’ sister party in Catalonia, En Comú, has dropped the issue as a red line to negotiate with the PSOE. En Comú’s leader, Marcelo Expósito, said that the referendum was the party’s “proposal for resolving the dissatisfaction in Catalonia... Our idea is a binding referendum, but we do not know exactly what the PSOE proposes or how they think it will work.”

Iglesias’ inclusion of the IU, which saw a precipitous decline from 11 seats to 2 in December’s elections, in a future coalition government is based on its offer to mediate between Podemos and the PSOE. During the round of meetings between King Felipe with party heads, IU leader Alberto Garzón said that he thought it was “perfectly possible for a left-wing coalition government to be formed” and that IU would “support any candidate who puts a proper social programme on the table.”

Another possible coalition partner is the Basque Nationalist Party (PNV), which has stated that it would support a PSOE government if the Basque people were given a new political status, greater prominence given to the economic agreement the region has with Spain and more emphasis on the “right to self-determination.”

What is taking place is a conspiracy against the working class led by Podemos, which is using all the political influence it has to spread the lie that a PSOE-Podemos government will be a vehicle for the “social change” Spain needs. The opposite is true.

All of these parties willing to form or support a “left government” have a historical record and programme of pro-austerity and war.

The PSOE has ruled Spain for 25 of the 38 years since the end of the fascist Franco dictatorship, acting as the main instrument of capitalist rule in Spain. It spearheaded Spain’s entry into the European Union, the common currency and NATO. It imposed deep cuts in public expenditure, labour and pension “reforms,” and wage cuts, and supported the war on Libya in 2011 and the continued US-led occupation of Afghanistan. Its programme is no different from that of the PP.

For the Spanish ruling elite, a majority PP government would be the preferred option and a PP-PSOE coalition second. However, the PSOE fears that accepting calls for a grand coalition with the PP would discredit it completely and end in a possible surge in support for Podemos.

Podemos, regardless of its rhetoric, has cheered Syriza’s austerity measures in Greece, making clear its readiness to facilitate the imposition of similar attacks in Spain. For the past two years it has invested huge amounts of energy in promoting itself as a serious party to rule in the name of the bourgeoisie. It has included former judges, police and even a former Chief of the Defence Staff in its leadership; made patriotic speeches in defence of national salvation; and horse-traded the formation of regional governments and local town councils with the Socialist Party and other parties.

The IU has an even longer record of supporting the PSOE and even the right-wing Popular Party (PP). In Andalusia, IU was in a regional coalition government with the PSOE, cutting the region’s budget by €2.6 billion in two years. In the region of Extremadura, it supported a PP government that devastated the region with austerity measures.

More important still, IU has played a pernicious role in working hand-in-hand with the trade unions, specifically the IU-aligned CCOO, in demobilizing the working class, calling the occasional strike to let off steam and then agreeing to wage cuts and redundancies.

Pseudo-left groups such as El Militante, En Lucha, Corriente Roja and Anticapitalistas have dedicated themselves systematically to the creation, promotion and packaging of Podemos and IU as a progressive alternative—just as they did with Syriza and the Left Bloc. By doing so, they have sought to prevent the working class from building its own, independent revolutionary party to politically challenge the ruling class’s warmongering and austerity policies.



To contact the WSWS and the Socialist Equality Party visit:

**[wsws.org/contact](https://www.wsws.org/contact)**